



# **The institutionalization of multilevel politics in Europe**



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# Declaration

I hereby declare that this dissertation is the result of my own work and includes nothing which is the outcome of work done in collaboration except as declared in the Preface and specified in the text; its contents are original, except where specific reference is made to the work of others; and it is not substantially the same, in whole or in part, as any that I have submitted, or, is being concurrently submitted for a degree or diploma or other qualification at the University of Cambridge or any other University or similar institution. This dissertation complies with the word limit and formatting standards as per the guidelines of Human, Social and Political Science Degree Committee.

Rusen Yasar  
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# Abstract

This thesis addresses the question as to why multilevel politics is becoming an integral part of politics in Europe. Multilevel politics is conceptualized as a system which functions through a complex web of political relations within and across levels of decision making. The thesis argues that the rise of multilevel politics can be explained by its institutionalization in terms of the emergence, the evolution and especially the effects of relevant institutions. Based on a mixed-method research project, the influence of European institutions on subnational actors and the alignment of actor motives with institutional characteristics are empirically shown.

The first chapter of the dissertation establishes the centrality of institutions for political transformation, examines the role of transnational and domestic institutions for multilevel politics, and contextualizes the research question in terms of institution-actor relations. The second chapter develops a new-institutionalist theoretical framework that explains the emergence, the evolution and the effects of the institutions, and formulates a series of hypotheses with regard to freestanding institutional influence, power distribution, material benefits and political identification. The third chapter outlines the mixed-method research design which addresses individual-level and institutional-level variations through a Europe-wide survey and a comparative case study.

The fourth chapter on survey results shows generally favourable views on multilevel politics, and strong associations of these views with the independent variables under scrutiny. The fifth chapter specifies a multivariate model which includes all posited variables and confirms the majority of the hypotheses. Therefore, the new-institutionalist argument is broadly confirmed, while there is relatively weak evidence to sustain sociological explanations. The final chapter compares the Committee of the Regions and the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, and examines the institutional characteristics which correspond to the hypothesized variables. It is then concluded that the two institutions share several overarching similarities, and display complementarity in other aspects.





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# Introduction

In an article which appeared almost three decades ago discussing intuitive predictions about what the world order would look like in 2013, Daniel Bell (1987, pp. 13-14) suggested that ‘the nation state is becoming too small for the big problems of life, and too big for the small problems of life’. The immediate implication of this observation is that world politics need more prominent units at both supra-national and subnational levels at the expense of the national. However, today, one can find mixed evidence regarding the fate of the nation state. World politics are still dominated by national actors, yet it is also true that globalization has posed a fundamental challenge to the primacy of the nation state. In relation to political units larger and smaller than the nation state, this challenge has often been understood in view of global-local relations (Cox, 1997), or even reconceptualized in the portmanteau term ‘glocalization’ (Swyngedouw, 1997, 2004). This apparent relevance of the glocal has ignited academic interest, in both normative and empirical terms, in a possible transformation of world politics connecting all scales from the local to the global.

The challenges posed by globalization to the nation state constitute a problem for normative theory because global capitalism leads to ‘deterritorialized law’, creating opportunities for escaping the political scrutiny of national governments, that is, the only place where popular sovereignty can be expressed in the conventional system of states (Benhabib, 2007). At the same time, cosmopolitan norms also rise as the other side of globalization and they have the potential to enhance popular sovereignty in a different way which does not exclusively rely on the nation state (ibid). In this sense, cosmopolitan suggestions to uphold popular sovereignty in a globalizing world include ‘republican federalism’ at global scale, and ‘interlocking networks’ across the local, the national and the global (ibid., pp. 31-33). Along the same line of cosmopolitan thinking, this can be achieved

through vertical dispersion of political authority, that is, both centralization and decentralization among political units of various sizes, none of which should be predominant by default (Pogge, 1992, p. 54), and popular participation into the communities closest to the citizens as well as wider political networks in regional<sup>1</sup> or global levels (Held, 1995, p. 233). In short, a normatively grounded cosmopolitan democracy prescribes a global political order which consists of equivalent multiple levels of decision making.

While the ‘ought’ of normative theories may not capture what is actually happening, more empirically oriented studies also find discrepancies between the Westphalian system of national sovereignty and the changing conditions of world politics. One way to approach this problem is challenging territorially enclosed units, or, in other words, claiming that territory is irrelevant to political functions and a merely residual aspect of politics (cf. Keating, 2008). However, political developments during the last decades have shown that territorial politics are persistent, and, indeed, are an essential part of the reshaping of the political system(s) (ibid). If the ongoing transformation is taken to mean the demise of the nation state, smaller regional units can be put forward as more adept territorial units for new global conditions (Ohmae, 1995). But it is also possible to understand the continuing political relevance of territory without going so far, and by focusing on the rescaling of the state together with the rise of new spheres of politics and actors at subnational and supranational territorial levels (Brenner, 1998; Sassen, 2000; Keating, 2009, 2013). Therefore, there are also empirical grounds on which one can expect a relative equalization of subnational, national and supranational levels of decision making.

One of the most interesting implications of this development is the emerging interaction between subnational and supranational levels, in contradiction to a strictly *international* system wherein only actors at the national level interact. On the one hand, from the supranational vantage point, as world politics resemble

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<sup>1</sup>The geographic scope of what is meant by a region is highly variable; it can refer to an area or unit at a territorial level above or below countries. In order to avoid terminological confusion in this dissertation, ‘region’ will be used to mean a territorial unit between the local and the national, which is sometimes labelled as ‘meso’ (Sharpe, 1993). However, in this sentence, it is used with a larger connotation, such as the area covered by the European Union, as the main point here is the relevance of all levels between the local and the global.

more and more what can be called ‘global governance’<sup>2</sup>, international organizations at varying scales increasingly expand their bases of participation to diverse political actors, including those from subnational levels, while local and regional actors also establish their own transnational organizations (Alger, 2010). For this reason, it is suggested that ‘those desiring to *predict the future* of global governance, and those desiring to *develop a vision* of preferred future global governance, are challenged to predict the nature of this inevitable change [in the array of significant actors and their activities]’ (ibid, p. 74; original emphases). On the other hand, from the subnational vantage point, local and regional actors increasingly engage in transnational political activities, which is conceptualized by earlier works as multi-layered policy/diplomacy (Hocking, 1993) or paradiplomacy (Duchacek, 1984; Aldecoa and Keating, 1999).

The main aim of this study is to further the understanding of the transformation of the world political order as characterized by the simultaneous participation of actors from multiple levels. Without the disappearance of the national level but with a redefinition of its role, this transformation will be conceptualized as the emergence of multilevel politics, as a term covering both the increasing internationalization of subnational politics and the diversification of actors in global politics, the significance of which relies on its normative desirability as well as empirical plausibility. Meanwhile, Europe offers the best place to investigate such political phenomena; not only has European integration resulted in the strongest supranational governance structures, but also the continent has witnessed a considerable degree of decentralization in domestic structures which has enabled subnational actors to engage in multilevel political activities. Moreover, the parallel processes of supranational integration and domestic decentralization have also led to the emergence of vertical links across multiple levels of governance—a set of practices conceptualized as multilevel governance. Finally, these links are institutionalized by formal organizations, such as the Committee of the Regions within the EU, but the institutionalization is not limited to the governance of the EU and also results in equally important organizations such as the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities under the Council of Europe. These organizations

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<sup>2</sup>The term ‘governance’ signifies a departure from traditional forms of governing which are highly structured and mostly hierarchical, towards more interactive decision making processes with the participation of diverse actors and with less clearly defined hierarchies. The movement from governing to governance is also discussed in the next chapter.

can be taken as the institutional embodiment of a multilevel political system, because they provide local and regional actors with the opportunity to participate in multilevel political activities, with minimal obstruction due to their national background.

In this respect, the focus of this thesis will be on multilevel politics in Europe. It will address the question as to why multilevel politics are emerging against the background of a system of strictly national sovereignty, and it will argue that the institutionalization of such new forms of political activity is the major driver behind this transformation. Institutionalization will be understood as the sum of the emergence, the evolution, the entrenchment, and the effects of new institutions. Observing that important institutions of multilevel politics have emerged, evolved and been entrenched in European politics, hence establishing that these aspects of institutionalization have materialized, the empirical focus will be on the effects of institutions. In this framework, if multilevel politics is effectively institutionalized, these institutions will encourage more favourable attitudes towards multilevel politics on the part of the involved political actors, and display characteristics that match the expectations of actors regarding their presumed effects. Thus, the main research question is specified as the following: do the influence of European institutions on subnational political actors and the expectations of the same actors from institutions work towards producing and reproducing multilevel politics, and if so, why? If the theoretical conceptualization of the rise of multilevel politics through institutionalization has an empirical counterpart, this should be visible in the institutional effects over actors and the institutional characteristics themselves. Therefore, the major analytical aim of the research will be explaining whether institutional effects and characteristics are indeed related to multilevel politics and the extent to which they contribute to its institutionalization.

As a comprehensive response to both parts of the research question, it will be argued that institutions affect individual attitudes to become more favourably disposed to multilevel politics not only by virtue of their existence as the embodiment of multilevel politics, but also because they are expected to redistribute power and resources among different groups of actors, to provide effective means of political action which actors would rationally choose for pursuing their preferences, and to generate new roles of political activity with which actors may more appropriately identify themselves. More specifically, the redistribution of competences across

levels of governance, material incentives which exist for multilevel political activity, the effectiveness of using transnational organizational channels, and political identification with roles which challenge the primacy of national allegiance contribute to the effects of the institutions of multilevel politics. In return, it will be shown that institutions adopt the characteristics compatible with the same qualities.

The main six chapters of the dissertation will develop this thesis and present the empirical evidence against which a series of hypotheses are tested. The overall structure of the thesis, hence the contents of each chapter, are summarized in the next paragraphs.

*Chapter 1: Rise of multilevel politics* initiates the discussion with a review of the literature which unpacks the introductory statements made above. In this sense, it begins with paradiplomacy as an existing concept to address supranational-subnational links, and the analytical and terminological choice of multilevel politics as a more comprehensive phenomenon. The main purpose of the chapter is contextualizing multilevel politics within relevant bodies of academic literature, specifying an overall approach for its study, and establishing the background of the research problem. It argues in the first place that institutions are central in embodying and driving structural transformation, and second, that the ensuing institutional innovation occurs through interaction with individual actors. The centrality of institutions is substantiated by showing how European integration is in essence an institution-building process, and the resulting political system is shaped by the effects of such institutions. Multilevel governance is best understood in this framework, but the literature built around it tends to emphasize the disordered practices at the expense of common institutional patterns. When the institutional dimension is taken seriously in previous studies, it is mostly in the form of explaining institutional change. In this sense, the research question is formulated to contribute to this literature by explaining institutional effects, particularly in terms of their influence over the actors, which is the most underplayed aspect. A closer look at the relevant institutions shows that cross-national variation still shapes multilevel relations, but the Committee of the Regions and the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities stand out as having a high potential to override the possible repercussions of different domestic competences, hence as the best embodiment of multilevel politics. Finally, motives of subnational actors

for taking part in multilevel political activities as posited by existing works can be best explained in terms of their relationship to institutionalized processes. In this respect, not only does the institution-actor axis form the most suitable analytical level for empirical research, but also it remains the area in which academic contribution is needed the most.

*Chapter 2: Institutionalist theory of multilevel politics* develops a comprehensive theoretical framework for explaining the institutionalization of multilevel politics. Adopting an eclectic approach to utilize all three strands of new institutionalism, namely historical, rational choice and sociological accounts, the theory provides a grounded understanding of the institutions of multilevel politics in terms of their origins, evolution and effects. Accordingly, institutions of multilevel politics emerge as a response to changing political circumstances, under which popular sovereignty does not have to be confined to the national sphere. Once established, they display self-asserting tendencies and their existence becomes virtually irrevocable. This process of getting entrenched in the European political system should work through shaping actor behaviour and adapting to actor expectations. Therefore, the chapter argues that multilevel politics in Europe is, indeed, institutionalized by showing that its institutions display qualities that conform to the theoretical premises of new institutionalism regarding origins, evolution and effects<sup>3</sup>. Yet the observations in the last aspect remain too broad and imprecise, which should be complemented by empirical research to ascertain that institutionalization also materializes in terms of institutional influence on subnational actors. In that respect, new institutionalism also serves as the basis of a series of hypotheses to guide the research project, which will examine the effects and characteristics of institutions in view of their very existence, power redistribution, material benefits, effectiveness and political identification.

*Chapter 3: Mixed-method approach to multilevel politics* describes the methodological framework necessary for testing these hypotheses rigorously. The mixed-method approach aims to capture variation at both individual and institutional levels in order to discern whether institutions have an independent leverage, that is, to show that variations in institutional influence and institutional features are

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<sup>3</sup>The theoretical framework follows the outline provided by Hall and Taylor (1996); not only does new institutionalism consist of the above-mentioned three strands, but also all these strands are concerned with different aspects of institutions such as origins, evolution and effects.

associated with the variation in attitudes towards multilevel politics or the institutional embodiment of multilevel politics. The individual-level research is realized through a Europe-wide survey with subnational political actors, and this chapter discusses the sampling procedures, the definition of variables, and the methods of analysis. The institutional-level research is realized through the comparison of two European organizations, whereby an in-depth qualitative analysis is used to examine their institutional characteristics with respect to the theorized dimensions. The cases of the Committee of the Regions and the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities are selected based on their significance for multilevel politics and their suitability for a comparative logic.

*Chapter 4: Subnational attitudes towards multilevel politics* presents the results of the survey and the first stage of quantitative analyses. First, the univariate analyses explicate the operationalization of variables in the light of collected data, summarize the responses given by survey participants in quantitative terms, specify the values assigned to them, and render the distributions amenable to further statistical analyses where necessary. Second, the bivariate analyses explore the relationships among variables, which serves two main purposes. On the one hand, the positive association of the majority of independent variables with the views on multilevel politics affirm the accuracy of the hypothesized relationships. On the other hand, the suitability of the data for multivariate modelling is established by the fact that pairwise correlations are relatively low and reasonably linear, with a few exceptions which are taken into account in later stages of the analysis.

*Chapter 5: Institutional effects and multilevel politics: a multivariate model* presents the main quantitative analysis. First, it specifies a multivariate model through hierarchical modelling in view of explanatory power and parsimony, and necessary adjustments as a result of regression diagnostics. In addition, a detailed examination of country-level variation does not return any systematic patterns, increasing the confidence in using a model wherein the unobserved country characteristics are simply controlled for through fixed effects. The content of the model, which is specified as offering the best fit to the data and which involves all posited variables, supports the main argument of the dissertation. More specifically, the interpretation of the explanatory power of individual variables reveals that the empirical evidence supports the argument more strongly in terms of the direct influence of institutions, power distribution and material benefits, but weakly with

respect to sociological factors of political identification. For this reason, while the main argument is endorsed overall, it should be accepted with certain reservations about varying degrees of explanatory power among its constituent hypotheses.

*Chapter 6: Institutional forms of multilevel politics: a comparative case study* focuses on the institutional-level variation, and presents the findings from the comparative case study of the Committee of the Regions and the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities. First, the re-examination of the survey data reveals that there is no observable difference between the two organizations in quantitative terms. Against this background, the qualitative analyses show that respective institutional characteristics of the two organizations display several comparative advantages in the context of overarching similarities. In view of their mere existence, their most fundamental property can be seen as constituting supranational fora for subnational actors from all over Europe, hence an embodiment of multilevel politics. As for comparative advantages, while CoR tends towards upward dispersion of authority as a result of the political significance of the EU, the Congress has a stronger emphasis on downward dispersion as a champion of subnational democracy. Furthermore, the material benefits of institutionalization are more visibly present in the case of CoR, thanks to its more effective policy-making environment. Meanwhile, the Congress is a site of normative debate, entailing stronger chances of diffusing European and universal ideas of democracy with a subnational emphasis, thus exerting value-driven influence. Overall, by highlighting non-quantifiable institutional features and the complementarity of different institutions, the comparative case study shows that the institutionalization of multilevel politics works through distinct contributions of institutions towards a cohesive system as depicted by the main argument.

Finally, a concluding chapter takes stock of these findings and re-evaluates the argument. It also discusses conceptual, theoretical, methodological and political implications of the thesis in general. In the light of the empirical research which confirms the majority of the hypotheses, these implications are generally positive. First, multilevel politics is proposed as a strong concept to broaden a relatively narrow focus on governance and the EU. Second, an eclectic new-institutionalist approach is valuable in itself and for further studies of multilevel politics. Third, multi-method research design is necessary to address multiple aspects of this phenomenon which are not always reducible to a single type of observation. Fourth,



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the institutional diversity of multilevel politics is also reflected in the complementarity between highly similar European organizations.



# Chapter 1

## Rise of multilevel politics

Multilevel politics, as briefly conceptualized in the Introduction, designates a political system characterized by the participation of actors from multiple levels of decision making which are not situated in a predetermined hierarchy. The purpose of this chapter is to unpack this conceptualization through an overview of relevant bodies of literature, examine its political and intellectual context, and explore the most appropriate approaches to study the subject. In this respect, direct relations between subnational and supranational levels constitute one of the most fundamental challenges to the existing system of national sovereignty and academic literature built upon it, and thereby, the concepts of territorial rescaling and paradiplomacy offer the best starting point to anchor the concept of multilevel politics in the academic literature.

Both territorial rescaling and paradiplomacy are primarily linked to the pressures posed by globalization (Keating, 1999; Sassen, 2004). Changing economic conditions alter the functional characteristics of territorial units, for instance by eliminating the role of the nation state as a protector of subnational units and by forcing regions to compete globally (Keating, 1998). Yet along the same line of thinking, politics, institutions and interests should be considered as important as the functional pressures exerted by globalization (Keating, 2013, p. 49). Broadly following Michael Keating's approach, these will be adapted to the present study which will address the political aspects of multilevel relations, their institutionalization, and the influence of institutions on actors. More specifically, he explains the rise of paradiplomacy through three sets of factors: the weakening of the na-

tion state, the rise of transnational institutions, and changing motives of subnational actors (Keating, 1999).

In this framework, the weakening of the nation state is not only the cause of the rise of multilevel politics, but also its consequence, since a systemic change towards multilevel politics would mean a decrease in the relative importance of the national level. Thereby, studying the rise of multilevel politics is analogous to studying the weakening of the nation state. Moreover, these three sets of factors are not necessarily developing independently from one another, and studying the interlinkages among them will be as interesting as focusing on each set of factors separately. For this reason, the focus must be on how the interactions between institutional and actor-based aspects relate to the rise of multilevel political activities.

A more recent major work on paradiplomacy (Kuznetsov, 2015) identifies eleven dimensions of the concept on the basis of a thorough review of the literature, which can be used to further explicate these three aspects. According to this categorization, the dimensions of globalization, global economy, and environment would correspond to exogenous pressures, while the dimensions of nationalism, borders, diplomacy and separatism can be linked to the actor-related aspects, and those of international relations and geopolitics to the political context. However, in spite of mentioning domestic constitutional and federalist dimensions, a stronger emphasis on transnational institutional dimensions is needed. In the explanatory framework proposed by Kuznetsov (*ibid.*, ch. 5), the institutional focus is almost exclusively on the domestic sphere, or on the case study of subnational entities; in this sense, it is arguably missing a crucial aspect of the larger picture which the present study will attempt to supplement<sup>1</sup>. Moreover, a conceptual choice has to be made here for the same reason, since the phenomenon of interest in this thesis is broader than the external activities of subnational entities. The meaning of paradiplomacy will thus be taken as limited to these activities, while multilevel politics will be used more broadly not only to cover paradiplomacy, but also to integrate political, institutional and actor-related aspects altogether.

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<sup>1</sup>This point is not intended as a criticism of the book, since the author explicitly sets the major analytical aim as a framework for the case studies on paradiplomacy. However, the study of this subject as a large-scale political phenomenon, as endeavoured here, requires further dimensions to be considered. Justifications as to why transnational/international institutions are assumed so essential are given throughout the literature review offered below.

Another reason proposed for using a different terminology, such as multi-layered policy instead of paradiplomacy, is a putative need to abandon dominant paradigms of international politics and foreign policy (Hocking, 1993, 1999). While acknowledging that multilevel relations potentially imply a radical departure from the Westphalian system of sovereignty which reserves international politics exclusively to the nation state, and that the actors in multi-layered political environments must not be assumed to be unitary and uniform (*ibid.*), the room for continuity or dynamics of gradual change should not be disregarded either. Furthermore, neither normative nor explanatory theories prescribe or foresee a complete disappearance of the national level, which would indeed be an unrealistic and merely speculative position given the existing context of world politics where the resilience of the nation state cannot be so easily ignored. Multilevel politics can be more prudently conceived as a hybrid coexistence of old and new forms of governance and political relations marked by increased degrees of choice and flexibility instead of a strictly hierarchical one (Loughlin, 2009). Thereby, there is no self-evident reason to assume that multilevel relations represent a complete rupture from the existing context and require a completely new approach; instead, the problem can be appropriately addressed by starting with the scope for transformation envisaged in existing theories of politics. Accordingly, multilevel politics can be defined as a political system which functions through a complex web of horizontal and vertical relations within and across territorial levels of decision making and which is not primarily orchestrated by the national level.

On this basis, the following sections will try to develop an approach that extracts the analytically relevant features of multilevel politics with regard to the political, institutional and actor-related aspects. First, the political aspect will be examined with a focus on the main properties of the European political system. This section will show that the current European context of multilevel politics is marked by the existence of supranational institutions with relative autonomy from national governments, and that these institutions have indeed evolved towards a multilevel system. Having thus established the centrality of institutions, the second section will describe the institutional context of multilevel relations, broadening the focus to include the channels both outside the European Union and within the national sphere. Finally, the third section will show that the motives of actors for multilevel political engagement cannot be thought independently of such insti-

tutional developments. In this sense, it will be concluded that the institution-actor axis represents the best level of analysis for empirical research without necessarily losing sight of the broader context of the phenomenon, but remains an understudied area of multilevel politics. For this reason, the larger inquiry about political transformation will be concentrated on a research question of how institutions affect actor behaviour.

## 1.1 European context

The rise of multilevel politics is fundamentally at odds with a traditional understanding of international politics, according to which national governments are the only relevant actors. From a realist perspective, the hierarchical nature of domestic systems is radically different from the anarchical nature of the international structure (Waltz, 1979), ruling out the autonomy of both supranational institutions and subnational actors. At a theoretical level, institutional liberalism proposes a strong alternative to this understanding by showing the autonomous leverage of international institutions (Keohane and Nye, 1977; Keohane, 1984, 2012; Nye, 1988), and the possibility of trans-governmental relations whereby sub-units<sup>2</sup> of states interact within international institutions (Keohane and Nye, 1974).

At an empirical level, European integration as a historical process and the European Union as its eventual product represent the biggest challenge to the conventional understanding of the Westphalian system, making it the most likely case to ascertain the development of multilevel politics. For this reason, this section will discuss the meaning of European integration for international politics, its implications beyond the international relations-based questions, and its evolution towards a system of multilevel governance.

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<sup>2</sup>The term ‘sub-unit’ does not necessarily mean subnational authorities. It is rather used to designate any part of the administrative structure of a state which is not conventionally supposed to perform foreign policy activities. However, subnational authorities can equally be seen as such, once the functional distribution of competences and the hierarchical organization of a national government can be disaggregated for international political purposes.

### 1.1.1 European politics: from integration to governance

Although European integration can be seen as a special case of international politics, theories of integration have come to be recognised as a distinct set of theories in their own right (Rosamond, 2000), including those which are quite incompatible with a mainstream understanding of international politics, such as federalism (Burgess, 2000) or confederal consociation (Chryssochoou, 2001). Yet the standard theories of integration are neofunctionalism and intergovernmentalism, both of which are derived from the theories of international relations. While neofunctionalism follows a liberal tradition, intergovernmentalism can be seen as aligning more closely with the realist paradigm in many respects, although the main theorist of the latter, Andrew Moravcsik (1993, 1997), insists on the liberal (albeit non-institutionalist) background of the theory. In this respect, the two main theories of integration share common premises to a limited extent, and one of the central issues of contention remains as the degree to which an autonomous leverage can be attributed to European institutions.

Neofunctionalism is an interpretation of functionalism, according to which international agencies, such as European communities, are more likely to offer the benefits that people seek, and to shift the popular allegiance away from the nation state (Mitrany, 1948, 1965). The neofunctionalist interpretation, as exemplified by the works of Ernst Haas (1964; 1968) and Lindberg (1963), puts forward a quasi-automatic process of deepening integration triggered by the first steps; namely, initial integration in a sectoral economic area, in this case coal and steel, would ‘spill over’ onto other economic and political areas leading towards higher levels of political integration.

Intergovernmentalism builds on the self-criticism by neofunctionalist theorists (e.g. Haas, 1975; cf. Moravcsik, 1993), as well as the external critiques of the neofunctionalist theory. Among the latter, one of the most important arguments is Stanley Hoffmann’s (1966; 1982) assertion that the coexistence of European communities and member states is more appropriately interpreted as the preservation of national sovereignty than the demise of the nation state<sup>3</sup>. Even in an advanced level of integration, it is equally plausible to argue, in retrospect, that European

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<sup>3</sup>From the perspective of international relations theories, while Hoffmann’s argument can be seen as a realist critique of the existing theories of integration, his overall approach is also critical of a crude form of realism (Hoffmann, 1981; Keohane, 2009).

integration in fact rescued the nation state (Milward, 1984, 1994). Thus, liberal intergovernmentalism puts the emphasis on treaty-making which drives the integration, thus the expression of national interests (Moravcsik, 1993, 1998). The partial concessions of sovereignty to European organizations are explained by the argument that it is in the rational interest of national governments to ensure the oversight of commitments, because they are better off when they benefit from the interdependence (Moravcsik, 1997).

In this context, the two main theories of integration differ on the degree to which European organizations can have autonomous leverage *vis-à-vis* nation states. Yet, looking beyond the disagreements, they share the view that integration is a process of institution building <sup>4</sup>. Given the disagreement, one of the few uncontroversial claims that can be made about the European Union is that it is neither simply another international organization in the traditional sense, nor a federal super-state which reduced member states into constituent units. Given the undeniable importance of the resulting institutions, the European Union is a *sui generis* form of polity with implications for all levels (Schmitter, 1996).

Once the institutions get entrenched and their centrality is recognized, the approach to European integration must undergo a shift of focus. In this sense, it became a legitimate subject of study, first, for comparative politics (Hix, 1994; Risse-Kappen, 1996), and second, for the governance approach (Hix, 1998; Kohler-Koch and Rittberger, 2006; Jachtenfuchs, 2001). Governance signifies the increasing role of a variety of state and non-state actors, engaging into decision making processes without necessarily relying on the traditional hierarchical state structure. The outcome is a penetrated web of relations influential at both European and domestic levels, as domestic structures gradually adapt to the European logic of governance (Cowles, Risse-Kappen and Caporaso, 2001; Kohler-Koch, 1999).

Although European governance emerges as the final and encompassing outcome of integration, the analytical turns in European studies reflect the following interlinkages: the historical process of integration creates new institutions, then comparative politics examines the system shaped by these institutions, and governance approach deals with the policy-making implications of this system.

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<sup>4</sup>The ideas that liberal intergovernmentalism can be interpreted as envisaging at least a minimal degree of institutional autonomy, and the criticism that the low degree of envisaged autonomy is a shortcoming of the theory are discussed more extensively in Section 2.1.2.



In other words, the continuity among the political developments that led to disciplinary shifts is as important as the ruptures among them. Therefore, a solid understanding of the institutional background is needed for an appropriate study of governance, and this background should provide a degree of coherence if the governance networks constitute a self-contained system despite all their fuzziness.

### **1.1.2 Multilevel governance**

One of the most prominent forms of the governance approach focuses on multilevel relations, and the studies focusing on the concept of multilevel governance constitute the most relevant body of literature, to which the present thesis will contribute. Furthermore, the coexistence of a relatively stable institutional background and a fuzzy web of governance practices is also intrinsic to multilevel governance: whereas the existing academic works are usually interested in the latter aspect, this thesis is rather concerned with highlighting the importance of the former, hence using the concept of multilevel politics to designate the political-systemic and institutional dimension. The discussion below will review the literature on multilevel governance to explore the degree to which the institutional dimension is underplayed.

To begin with the historical background, the concept of multilevel governance emerged as a response to several political developments, notably the rising importance of regional/structural policy of the EU, which became the first and the most natural subject of study (Hooghe and Keating, 1994; Hooghe, 1996; Bache, 1998; Benz and Eberlein, 1999). Gary Marks (1993) coined the term in order to explain the causes and consequences of the institutional innovations that underlie structural policy, thus to provide a new theoretical account for an emerging system. Yet the concept has been more widely applied to other policy areas, even beyond the EU and Europe (Stephenson, 2013). Despite its relevance for political developments and rising popularity, however, the criticisms have been centred on its allegedly low degree of theoretical rigour, since it lacks clear propositions about explanations, causality and predictions (Jordan, 2001). Similarly, it is depicted as a '(dis)ordering framework' rather than a theory of European integration (Rosamond, 2000, p. 111), which fails to provide an account capable of making sense of European politics in a systematic way.

The fundamental challenge for multilevel governance is, therefore, to come up with a coherent account to explain practices that constantly defy coherence. This tension is visible in various ways in which multilevel governance is depicted. For example, a frequently cited and sufficiently comprehensive definition can be quoted as follows (Schmitter, 2004, p. 49):

an arrangement for making binding decisions that engages a multiplicity of politically independent but otherwise interdependent actors—private and public—at different levels of territorial aggregation in more-or-less continuous negotiation/deliberation/implementation, and that does not assign exclusive policy competence or assert a stable hierarchy of political authority to any of these levels.

The need for coherence can be seen in the overall qualification of multilevel governance as an arrangement for binding decision, but the rest is concerned with complexities such as the multiplicity and diversity of actors, mixture of negotiation, deliberation and implementation, and the non-requirement of exclusive competence and hierarchy.

Going back to the original definition, multilevel governance is meant to designate a system, but one of ‘continuous negotiation among nested governments at several territorial tiers’ (Marks, 1993, p. 392). Moreover, it can equally designate a change towards a relatively definite reconfiguration of competences, such as ‘the dispersion of authoritative decision making across multiple territorial levels’ (Hooghe and Marks, 2001, p. xi), or the web of connections including both the horizontal relations between units in the same level and the vertical relations across different levels (Bache, 2008, p. 21), thus increasing complexity. When two ideal-typical models of multilevel governance are distinguished (Hooghe and Marks, 2003), the difference corresponds to this tension between neatness and fuzziness. The first type is characterized by general-purpose jurisdiction, non-intersecting membership, a limited number of levels and stable architecture, while the second type is characterized by task-specific jurisdiction, intersecting membership, an indefinite number of levels and flexible design. As the actual practices of multilevel governance fall somewhere between these two ideal types, both a stable architecture and a flexible design must be accounted for.

One solution to this tension is defending multilevel governance, against the criticism of being unsystematic, as a theory which takes as the dependent variable a ‘transformed institutional architecture of the state’, and as one of the main independent variables the increasing complexity of policy making (Piattoni, 2015, p. 337). This builds upon earlier attempts to theorize multilevel governance as an actor-centred approach to explain the revision of institutional rules through the interaction of actors and institutions (Marks, 1996). Accordingly, several structural pressures lead to institutional reform, because it is a rational response of the actors, including national governments, to such pressures (Jachtenfuchs, 1995; Scharpf, 1994). More specifically, when the institutions and executives of the state are distinguished, the latter can be expected to voluntarily and rationally re-allocate competences if this offers benefits exceeding the cost of lost sovereignty (Marks, Hooghe and Blank, 1996, p. 349).

In sum, the academic literature on multilevel governance primarily draws attention to the complexity of policy-making, the multiplicity of actors, the flexibility of institutional design, etc., while the last remarks also show that it draws on a theoretical account of institutional transformation. However, when the ‘disordering’ aspects of multilevel governance are considered together with institutional developments, new questions arise. For example, if the institutionalization of multilevel governance is understood as the mutual adjustment of existing institutional arrangements through spontaneous collective responses of political actors to practical needs (Benz and Eberlein, 1999; Benz, 2000, 2011), two questions follow: First, what is the significance of the adjusted institutional arrangements, or are they simply meant to be readjusted in the face of new practical needs? Second, while institutional arrangements can change with respect to the motives of the actors, are these motives completely insensitive to institutional arrangements?

Therefore, this thesis is motivated by the understanding that a governance approach in general, and multilevel governance in particular, highlights the complexity, multiplicity and flexibility of practices, but pays insufficient attention to the systemic coherence and the institutional background which makes all these practices the manifestations of the same political phenomenon. It is in this sense that the central concept of this thesis is formulated as multilevel politics, rather than governance, to emphasize the analytical focus on exploring the common political-

systemic features and institutional patterns, instead of referring to an indeterminate set of spontaneous practices.

## 1.2 Institutional context

One of the main difficulties for specifying the institutional dimension of multilevel governance is the blurring of several distinctions that demarcate the traditional forms of political institutions, most notably that of domestic and international spheres, which makes it fundamentally innovative (Piattoni, 2009, 2010*b*). In stark contrast to a realist conception of an international/domestic dichotomy, the absence of hierarchy is extended to domestic systems while functional differentiation is extended to the European scale (Aalberts, 2004). Therefore, as multilevel governance is a concept that is primarily expected to explain the interlocking of political processes on multiple levels in domestic and international spheres (Piattoni, 2015, pp. 325-326), its political institutions must be those which bind these two spheres together.

For such an interlocking to constitute a coherent system, two parallel processes can be expected: the convergence of domestic structures towards the equalization of the competences of subnational authorities, and the emergence of common institutions at the international sphere. In this sense, European integration and decentralization are put forward as resulting from similar conditions such as globalization and intensifying interdependence (Soldatos and Michelmann, 1992), being mutually reinforcing (Sodupe, 1999), resulting in upward and downward shifts of power (Loughlin, 2004, p. 7), and changing the nature of borders (Christiansen and Jørgensen, 2000). Taken to the extreme, this depiction would correspond to a literal reading of the idea ‘Europe of the regions’.

Nonetheless, the rise and the fall of this idea in political and academic discourses over the last decades illustrate the prevalence of *realpolitik* and the limits of regional mobilization (Borras-Alomar, Christiansen and Rodriguez-Pose, 1994; Elias, 2008; Hepburn, 2008). The main challenge in this respect is the divergence in the types of regions, not to mention other subnational units, hence in their objectives and agendas (Loughlin, 1996*a*; Moore, 2008). Therefore, at best, the regional dimension of Europe can be depicted as ‘common threads of change against a background of persisting variation’ (Hooghe and Marks, 1996).

While domestic structures display considerable variation in the degrees of decentralization, transnational involvement is an essential part of real subnational autonomy, for which domestic devolution is a necessary but not sufficient condition (Agranoff, 2004). Moreover, for the realization of such a degree of autonomy, a favourable international environment is indispensable even for subnational authorities with significant devolved competences including foreign action, but such an environment is not always present (Philippart, 1998).

Taking account of these remarks, the following subsections will review institutional developments within the domestic and international spheres. First, despite the evident trend of decentralization, it cannot be said that domestic structures converged to a common institutional arrangement. Second, the international sphere displays diverse institutional channels, most of which reproduce the cross-national variation. It is only the formal organizations representing subnational authorities which provide a common institutional arrangement irrespectively of domestic backgrounds, namely the Committee of the Regions under the EU and the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities under the Council of Europe. Since such organizations operate both within and outside the contours of the EU, the institutionalized forms of multilevel politics coexist with the disordered governance practices, but do not depend on them.

### **1.2.1 Decentralization, regionalization and regionalism**

Defining multilevel politics as the dispersion of authority across levels, or upward and downward shifts of power away from the national government, the expected manifestation of the overall rescaling of the state in the domestic sphere is decentralization. Indeed such a trend has been observed in Europe for a few decades (Sharpe, 1979), and it has been shown more recently that since mid-XX<sup>th</sup> century decentralist trends, especially in the form of creating or strengthening regional-level units, has significantly outweighed centralist trends; '[n]ot every country has become regionalized, but where we see reform over time, it is in the direction of greater, not less, regional authority by a ratio of eight to one' (Marks, Hooghe and Schakel, 2008, p. 167). The overall trend can be seen as consisting of two interlinked aspects, regionalization pertaining to more top-down processes, while regionalism pertains to bottom-up processes driving demands from subnational

actors (Loughlin, 2013). The following overview will discuss both aspects in turn.

The timing or the intensification of decentralization is usually explained by large historical developments. More specifically, following the economic, political and social crises of the 1970s, the establishment of neoliberal/neoclassical economy as the dominant paradigm undermined the European welfare state which arguably represented the apogee of the nation state (Loughlin, 2007). In fact, the nation state, as a product and construct of modernity, had sought to integrate territory with partial success<sup>5</sup>, but by doing so it also had to produce or reproduce subnational units and levels (Keating, 2013, p. 42). The impossibility of realizing perfect homogenization and territorial integration required federal or regionalized structures as the only way to retain unity, and the same dynamics have led to more recent decentralist trends in the face of new challenges to territorial unity (Swenden, 2006, p. 46).

One way of understanding the implications of economic pressures is the need for subnational actors to become competitive, since the transition from the Keynesian to the neoclassical paradigm removed the national layer of protection which stood between the subnational units and global markets (Keating, 1998). The link between competitiveness and regional autonomy is best illustrated by different conceptions of fiscal federalism or regionalism (Oates, 2005). According to earlier approaches, which revolve around the ‘decentralization theorem’ (Oates, 1972), subnational fiscal autonomy is efficient with respect to being closer to citizens, hence better mapping their needs and preferences. Thus, if the distribution of preferences displays heterogeneity across localities, devolving power to lower levels results in an optimal system of governance to the extent that meeting locally specific preferences compensates for the lost advantages of centralized financial and political resources<sup>6</sup> (Schakel, 2010). According to later approaches to fiscal federalism which incorporate the public choice perspective (e.g. Bren-

<sup>5</sup>This idea is broadly based on the modernist theory of nations and nationalism, especially that of Ernest Gellner (1983). According to this conception, ‘nationalism is primarily a political principle that holds that the political and the national unit should be congruent’ (p. 1), and the nation and the state are two sides of this stipulated congruence. Of course this is only one theory from a large literature on nations and nationalism, but it is arguably the most consistent with the approach developed in the present work and the literature reviewed here.

<sup>6</sup>Such advantages are primarily the internalization of externalities, and economies of scale. The former refers in this case to accounting for the impact of a decision taken in one jurisdiction

nan and Buchanan, 1980), the devolution of fiscal competences creates sufficient competition to break government monopoly and require adjustment to an optimal government size, when it is assumed that governments are utility maximizers and that the cost of moving households and firms between jurisdictions is low.

In addition to the changing conception of economic policy making, more political factors also played a role, such as the motivation to improve the quality of governance through decentralization both in terms of output and accountability (Faguet, 2014), the need to appease potential conflicts which may emanate from socio-cultural composition by institutionalizing diversity through decentralization (Brancati, 2006), or simply the transition to democracy which required a decentralized arrangement after removing previous forces which were keeping the territorial unity rather artificially (Swenden, 2006, p. 1). Furthermore, European integration constitutes an important factor with the EU regional policy becoming the main source of development. This is especially true in the case of Central and Eastern European countries for which accession created strong incentives for institutionalizing a decentralized system (Brusis, 2002).

At the same time, similar explanations can also be offered for the bottom-up dynamics of regionalist demands. First of all, many of the above-cited works emphasize a sequential relationship between regionalization and regionalism; namely, the institutionalization of decentralization creates new actors who will sustain the demand for reform in an open-ended process (Keating, 2013, p. 177; Swenden, 2006, p. 47; Brancati, 2006). In this respect, it has been shown that decentralized systems increase the strength of regionalist parties (Brancati, 2008). Similarly, competition between regionally organized parties leads to higher demands for autonomy as compared to the competition between regionally and nationally organized parties (van Houten, 2007), suggesting that more regional framing of politics strengthen the demands for further reform.

As for the European dimension, alongside the supranational pull factors as discussed above and the sovereignty-challenging effects, European integration is supposed to render autonomy more affordable for smaller political units (Keating, 2013, p. 12). This idea is usually based on Alesina and Spolaore's (1997) argument on the optimal number of countries which increases in the context of eco-

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on another jurisdiction. The latter refers to the reduced cost of dealing with certain tasks in the central government which is by default larger than subnational governments.

conomic integration while the average size decreases. On the one hand, if the difference between acquiring domestic competences and outright secession is assumed to be only a matter of degree, demands for both autonomy and independence can be conceptualized in this way. On the other hand, the dependence of subnational units on the nation state is diminished as previously crucial functions of the latter such as market access and financial resources have moved to the European level. Empirical observations also support the view that transnational integration lowers the cost of regionalization, hence makes it more likely (Marks, Hooghe and Schakel, 2008).

Another interesting effect of European integration is its interaction with regionalist movements; also drawing upon Alesina and Spolaore's framework, increasing support for regionalist parties as a result of deeper integration can be explained by the argument that regions become more viable units of politics (Jolly, 2015). Meanwhile, Europeanization facilitated the formation of a more or less coherent alliance between ethnoregionalist parties despite the lack of a clear ideological harmony, but thanks to common denominators which can be found in their European political agenda (De Winter and Cachafeiro, 2002).

This overview shows that the institutionalization of rescaling in the form of decentralization and in particular regionalization is the result of an interplay between political and economic factors. Although wider forces behind rescaling are usually framed in economic terms, it should be acknowledged that regionalism also has important political roots, that a considerable part of the economic sources of regionalism is mediated through political processes, and that eventually economic regionalism has substantial implications for political regionalism (Agnew, 2013; van Houten, 2013). Overall, the political character of the general trend of decentralization is crucial as it goes beyond a simple administrative delegation of tasks and a principal-agent model which assigns a peripheral role to subnational authorities (Loughlin, 2007). Moreover, this rescaling of politics is marked by high degrees of asymmetry, diversity, flexibility and hybridity, which is blurring the previously significant distinctions between federal and unitary systems (Watts, 2013). While the focus of these observations has been the regional level, similar conclusions can also be drawn for the local, albeit to a lesser extent. Yet it is possible to see a movement from local government to governance, that is, more flexible patterns and institutions, due to intensifying economic competition,



the diffusion of new public management, and the growing role of the EU (John, 2001).

Nonetheless, it should be stressed that all these arguments focus on only one side of the subnational dimension, namely common trends, which does not necessarily mean a definite convergence. The main conclusion of two successive comprehensive studies on subnational democracy in Europe (Loughlin, 2004; Loughlin, Hendriks and Lidström, 2011) is the persistence of state traditions in subnational governance, although these state traditions can be categorized into several groups which display similarities in themselves. Common trends of transformation are therefore responses to common challenges against the background of this persisting variation. First, while many subnational authorities are successful in managing this transformation, the variation in their success is not necessarily a reflection of state tradition, but rather a result of how they thrive in competitive regionalism (Loughlin, 2004, p. 387). Second, as a result, the variation in institutional change/stability within and across groups of state tradition leaves room for further movements of reform (Hendriks, Loughlin and Lidström, 2011, pp. 732-733). For this reason, the common trend of decentralization as discussed in this subsection is not sufficient to assume away the challenge posed by the diversity of domestic constitutions within which subnational authorities are situated. Instead, with possibilities of further decentralization, domestic competences should be taken as a quintessential variable when analysing multilevel politics, parallel to the common trends observed at the international sphere.

### **1.2.2 Transnational channels for subnational actors**

The institutional channels through which subnational actors can reach the supranational level can be classified into three categories in terms of the major level providing such channels: supranational organizations, national mediation and direct subnational initiatives (Hooghe, 1995; Tatham, 2008). To begin with the most traditional, national mediation is not completely a novelty of multilevel governance since it is framed in a system of neatly nested political units without intersecting membership, hence clearly demarcating borders especially between states, whereby national governments easily retain their gatekeeper status. Nonetheless, as far as influencing EU policies is concerned, national channels have been put

forward by several studies as the most effective way. On the one hand, despite huge variation in the patterns of relationship between subnational authorities and central governments, a coalition between them is found to be essential for increasing the influence of the former (Bomberg and Peterson, 1998). On the other hand, the domestication of European governance, also known as the Europeanization of domestic politics, can be seen as a much more significant development than the internationalization of subnational authorities, and for this reason, influence can be better exerted on the EU through within-state channels which are better adapted to supranational decision making (Jeffery, 2000).

In both arguments, the domestic constitutional position and competences of subnational authorities are the most significant determinants of the potential influence, which leads to a problem to be addressed through other institutional channels: the asymmetry between the scarcity of opportunities available to subnational authorities with lesser legal, political and financial resources, and the flexibility of domestically stronger subnational authorities to utilize both national and alternative channels. For the first group, bypassing the national government remains the only option, hence counterintuitively, subnational authorities with weaker domestic competences are more likely to be motivated for state bypassing, that is, direct initiatives (Hooghe, 1995). It has also been shown that stronger subnational authorities are more likely to cooperate with their national governments by making use of their favourable domestic position (Tatham, 2011).

Such differences are reflected in the divergence between regionalized and federal entities; while the former focus mostly on autonomous foreign activities, the latter both lead such activities and try to influence national foreign policy (Blatter et al., 2008). In addition, mobilization within or without national channels is a matter of choice depending on various factors not limited to the domestic system. For instance, if the main motive for mobilisation is not in conflict with national agendas, or if the Council of Ministers of the EU is the most important location of decision, national channels are likely to be chosen, while an overlap between subnational and supranational competences which provide the opportunity of an exchange between the two, and political and cultural distinctiveness of subnational authorities from the central authority lead to alternative channels (Marks et al., 1996). It has also been shown more recently that party politics should be added to the effect of the degree of devolution and above-mentioned factors

(Tatham, 2010). However, it should be noted that, even if party incongruence and the degree of devolution lead to state bypassing, these do not necessarily result in conflict with the national governments (Tatham, 2013).

Furthermore, these findings are not necessarily in conflict with the argument that national channels provide an effective way of multilevel political engagement. They should be more profitable for subnational authorities in certain countries and for certain policy areas, but this is not sufficient to eliminate the existence of alternative channels as viable options. Meanwhile, the mere existence of such options undermines at least the gatekeeper position traditionally assumed by national governments, as subnational authorities are not confined to the limits posed by domestic structures (Blatter et al., 2008). Even so, resources derived from the domestic position influence the chances of success of direct initiatives. For instance, trying to influence European decision making through representation offices in Brussels is the most prevalent type of such initiatives, but these offices are mostly opened by subnational authorities which can afford the required funding (Marks, Haesly and Mbaye, 2002). In this sense, a large budget is a necessary condition for direct initiatives, and financial capability alone will accomplish promotional offices focusing on economic activities, whereas a well-staffed office which can accomplish further tasks requires political autonomy (Blatter et al., 2010). All these findings show that, even though the nation state is no longer the gatekeeper and subnational actors can choose between alternative channels, this choice is still determined by national factors to a considerable extent.

In addition to national mediation and direct initiatives, supranational institutions representing subnational authorities constitute the third major institutional channel of multilevel activities. The establishment of the Committee of the Regions (CoR), the main organization of this representation, coincided with the revived interest in deeper integration as embodied in the Maastricht Treaty, together with the aforementioned reform of the EU regional policy, hence the development of multilevel governance. The main logic behind its inception was that with subnational authorities becoming an integral part of the EU policy implementation, their input to legislation and decision making processes should be essential<sup>7</sup>.

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<sup>7</sup>This idea can be understood in a normative as well as pragmatic sense. It is both desirable and efficient to include actors who will endure the implications of a decision and who have the first-hand experience in implementing such decisions.

Thereby, supranational-level representation has become an essential condition for benefiting from the added value that subnational authorities could offer to the EU governance, even for relatively strong actors who could utilize other means (Vos, Boucké and Devos, 2002). Although this could be seen as the basis of profound changes in the institutional architecture of the EU, CoR was framed as an advisory body as the name ‘committee’ suggests<sup>8</sup>. Therefore, CoR has assumed a dual role of translating subnational interests into policy recommendation and being the representative institution of the subnational level. The academic appraisal of its place and importance is roughly divided along this duality; if the assessment is based on high expectations of a strong reassertion of the subnational level, or a fundamentally representative institution akin to a third chamber, disappointments are inevitable, but if the focus is put on whether subnational interests are effectively channelled into European decision making processes, CoR can be seen in a more positive light (Piattoni, 2010a).

To begin with earlier assessments, on the one hand, Thomas Christiansen (1996) finds its consultative functions ineffective, representation obscured by internal divisions, and legitimacy merely symbolic, thus he does not consider CoR as having any chance of exerting real influence on decision making in the EU. One of the most compelling difficulties that CoR had to face was the divergent domestic constitutional positions of subnational authorities, hence the definition of the units that it was supposed to represent (Loughlin, 1996b). In this sense, variation in the territorial administration systems was the first country-based dividing line which was also exacerbated by the reliance on national delegations as the main basis of alliance and the composition of delegates determined by national delegations (Christiansen, 1997; Van Der Knaap, 1994). Overall, the general tone of the early evaluations can be depicted as warranting a cautious approach against overestimating the place of CoR (Jeffery, 1995).

On the other hand, several other accounts offer considerable alternative viewpoints and findings. For instance, although it can be admitted that its impact through formal powers remained relatively insignificant, the real added value of CoR can be found in its informal role as a bridge between subnational and supra-

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<sup>8</sup>Formally, CoR has the same status as European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) whose consultative role is channelling the voice of interest groups. EESC was established in 1958, but it has hardly become an essential part of the institutional architecture of the EU.

national levels of government (McCarthy, 1997). At a different analytical level, the relationship of CoR with other EU bodies is argued to save it from a peripheral institutional position, especially with the supportive approach of the Commission providing the basis of real impact (Warleigh, 1997). Moreover, its multidimensional policy style transcends existing cleavages on several fronts with a consensual tendency (Farrows and McCarthy, 1997). In this respect, cross-cutting bases of alliance, such as organization along the lines of political groups as well as national delegations, shape decision making patterns in ways that overcome such cleavages, and in many cases lead to decisions taken by unanimity or near-unanimity (Hönnige and Kaiser, 2003). Finally, despite being a simply advisory body, CoR is distinctive in that it is composed of elected politicians who would work hard to ensure that their contributions are not ignored (Loughlin, 1996b).

Similar disagreements in the literature on CoR have been sustained in more recent works. While it has been argued that Christiansen's original findings continue to be relevant despite visible increases in its formal powers (Christiansen and Lintner, 2005), an analysis drawing on his very framework can also be used to show that CoR displays a significant degree of institutional capacity along the functional, representative and symbolic dimensions (Carroll, 2011). Additionally, while it can exert a considerable impact only if it meets certain conditions, otherwise remaining largely non-influential (Hönnige and Panke, 2013), one can also find evidence to suggest that CoR managed well the duality of its role by balancing the tasks of subnational interest representation and performing as an advisory body of the EU, hence establishing a stable place in the overall institutional architecture of the EU (Domorenok, 2009).

Amidst this continuing disagreement, CoR has now existed for more than two decades. Meanwhile, it acquired additional formal competences such as the right to appeal to the Court on issues related to subsidiarity<sup>9</sup>, and by the very virtue of its history so far, its institutional status has become more difficult to question. Thereby, the problems which were claimed to be damaging to the prospects of CoR have arguably proven to be less salient than initially supposed. Among these problems, therefore, inherent cleavages which were expected to reproduce na-

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<sup>9</sup>It is difficult to expect frequent use of this right to challenge EU bodies or governments, but it is indicative of the understanding that CoR is not merely an advisory body, and that it can formally advance its position.

tional differences should have been either overcome or made insignificant. In this respect, CoR, as the chief form of any supranational channel of subnational participation into European politics, is more likely than the previous channels to remove factors contingent on national background, and thus to institutionalize multilevel governance (Warleigh, 1999). For this reason, special attention should be paid to CoR for the institutional study of multilevel politics.

### **1.2.3 Multilevel relations beyond the EU**

Although the EU provides the strongest case for the importance of multilevel relations, a brief overview of similar developments outside of its contours would be useful to highlight the broader relevance of the phenomenon. To begin with a different geographical focus, North America is another part of the world likely to display increasing transnational political engagement among subnational authorities, thanks to the federal structures of respective countries, as exemplified by the works of Dymont (2001), Fry (1998), Kuznetsov (2015, ch. 6) and Mingus (2006). In fact, the roots of the study of paradiplomacy can be easily found among North American scholars, mostly on North American subjects in 1970s, earlier than the expansion of the field to Europe (Kuznetsov, 2015, p. 34). Nonetheless, to reiterate what has been said about Europe, due to the absence of a favourable international environment which might be provided by supranational integration, and concomitantly the absence of intense institutionalization, today the progress of such developments in North America lags behind Europe. For instance, the case of the Pacific Salmon Commission is analysed as a catalysing institutional environment (Mingus, 2006), which is by no means comparable to the strength and influence of the EU. Yet the existence of such endeavours is indicative of the possibility that, with similar institutional developments in other parts of the world, multilevel politics would be more strongly asserted as a global phenomenon.

Focusing back onto Europe, a rich variety of similar transnational organizations with functionally or geographically delimited scopes can be found as well, including for example, the Alps Adriatic Alliance, Association of European Border Regions, Baltic Sea States Sub-regional Cooperation, Conference of European Regional Legislative Assemblies, Conference of European Regions with Legislative Power, EUROCITIES, Union of Baltic Cities, Conference of Peripheral

Maritime Regions of Europe, Four Motors for Europe, Council of Danube Cities and Regions, Assembly of European Wine-producing Regions, etc. Although this type of institutionalization is bound to face similar problems, which are discussed above with regard to the direct initiatives of subnational authorities, these cases also illustrate how multilevel relations get entrenched through a multitude of institutional strategies. Yet the coverage of functionally or geographically specific institutions is not sufficient to provide a holistic image of the multilevel institutional architecture of Europe at large.

In this respect, multilevel relations in Europe are also institutionalized through organizations which aim to represent subnational authorities in a broader scope, such as the Council of European Municipalities and Regions which is composed of national associations of local and regional governments, and the Assembly of European Regions which has a smaller membership coverage and which is limited to the regional tier, but which played an important lobbying role in the formation of CoR (Loughlin, 1996*b*; Sodupe, 1999). Finally, the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities (CLRAE) is a pan-European assembly for local and regional authorities, which both provides the opportunity of direct representation and benefits from the larger institutional architecture of the Council of Europe (CoE). Thereby, as a channel of representation comparable to CoR, with standard rules which do not vary with respect to the constitutional, political or economic conditions of each country, and by virtue of integrating this representation with a well-established European organization, the Congress is another organization worthy of scholarly attention for the institutional study of multilevel relations.

Nonetheless, as the academic interest in the CoE has been overshadowed by the obvious prominence of the EU, the Congress has remained understudied with the exception of a few works which are largely descriptive (De Castro, 1999; Schneider, 1994) or which mention it alongside many other international and transnational organizations (Alger, 2010). Despite limited academic interest, the history and the achievements of the Congress testify to its political significance. With its origins going back to 1957, the predecessors of the Congress existed during almost the entire history of the CoE, and it has proven to be an indispensable part of the institutional architecture of the CoE, since it was eventually given permanent status in 1994. Meanwhile, the European Charter for Local Self-Government, adopted by the pre-Congress Standing Conference in 1985, is ar-

guably the most important international document concerning local government to date, proving the capacity of the Congress to exert international political impact. In this respect, for a broader conception of multilevel politics in Europe, not limited to multilevel governance of the EU which potentially obscures the institutional background, the study of CLRAE will also offer important analytical insights.

### 1.3 Motives of subnational actors

In addition to the political and institutional contexts, the third dimension of the rise of multilevel politics is changing motives of actors. The importance of their agency is already recognized, explicitly or implicitly, by several studies cited in the preceding two sections, especially with regard to their interaction with institutions. For example, Marks's actor-centred approach is intended as an explanation of institutional change (Subsection 1.1.2, p. 19), and the variation in domestic competences explains the existence of multiple transnational channels and determines specific choices among them (Subsection 1.2.2, p. 26).

Despite this prevalent recognition, however, the interactions between actors and institutions have received relatively little attention from scholars. The studies which discuss actor motives do not go much beyond their identification as relevant factors for increasing multilevel political engagements, which are usually categorized in terms of economic, cultural and political motives (Keating, 1999; Blatter et al., 2010), with a possible addition of regular 'housekeeping' in border areas (Kuznetsov, 2015, pp. 109-110). For this reason, the discussion below will examine these motives with a view to highlighting the importance of the interactions between actors and institutions through several examples which illustrate these links.

To begin with economic motives which are linked to the need for catching up with the liberalizing global economy, such as attracting foreign investment to sustain and further the level of development, these are firstly a direct manifestation of the changes in the underlying economic conditions, namely the rise of global markets at the expense of nationally organized economies. However, adaptation to these changes is mediated by political institutions. Fiscal federalism, for instance, is a reflection of this changing economic logic which supposes subnational author-



ities as competing actors. Beyond the domestic sphere, the mediation by European political institutions is particularly important. At a general level, European integration has provided a more or less self-contained market with a corresponding polity. Moreover, EU institutions have also become the main source of funding for more specific development aims. While competition to access these funds is institutionalized through now popular practices of external offices of local and regional authorities in Brussels, influencing EU policy is possible through formal representation in CoR, if utilizing national channels is not deemed effective enough.

Cultural motives are linked to ethnic, religious, linguistic or other dissimilarity with the parent country, and/or similarity with bordering areas in another country. This basis of motives is primarily contingent on socio-cultural compositions of one or more countries, but arguably it is also affected by institutional developments. For within country dissimilarity, decentralization usually takes into account inner borders demarcated by cultural differences. For example, the regionalization of France, which had been the epitome of the unitary state structure, included a certain degree of asymmetry for Corsica with its designation as *collectivité territoriale*<sup>10</sup>. For cross-country similarity, the Schengen Area has removed barriers between people identifying themselves with a single community. This has been further institutionalized through the formation of 'Euroregions', such as the one which brings together the Austrian state of Tyrol with Italian provinces of South Tyrol and Trentino.

Political motives usually follow cultural motives, and in this sense, they are also contingent on social factors at a basic level. In the same vein, the relationship between regionalization and regionalism highlights the potential of institutions to generate and strengthen new actors<sup>11</sup>. Moreover, in a regionalized system, regionalist agendas are more likely to be mainstreamed into normal politics through existing institutions. Taking two recent examples, first, the question of independence

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<sup>10</sup>The special status of Corsica can be attributed to its geographical distinctiveness as an island, but it is still an illustrative case of the congruence of regional and cultural borders. Furthermore, France is not the only relevant case, and such congruence can be found in many other cases such as Catalonia and Basque Country in Spain, or communities and regions of Belgium.

<sup>11</sup>This is not to say that regionalist actors emerge only after regional units are established; such actors very probably played an indispensable role in the process of regionalization. However, the argument holds, without delving into a chicken-egg problem, that once regionalization occurs, regionalist actors irrevocably become an essential part of the new political system.

for Scotland was decided through a legally approved referendum, and second, in Spain where such a referendum has not been allowed, the Autonomous Community of Catalonia still serves as the institutional locus of independence demands. As for the European dimension, previous discussions testified to how European integration has made higher autonomy or independence a more viable option, hence it potentially reinforces regionalist motives. Meanwhile, party-political aspects of regionalism in both domestic and European spheres constitute another institutional layer in terms of such motives.

A more normatively based political motive for engaging in multilevel politics may be the contribution to the development of other subnational entities. With regard to political development, promoting democratic values, in particular local/regional democracy, and sharing and exchanging experiences of subnational self-government should be added to other political motives that are rather pragmatic. While CoR considers the improvement of subnational democracy to be among its main objectives, organizations founded independently by subnational authorities can also serve as platforms for policy learning and norm diffusion. In particular, the Congress of the CoE emerges as the main institution championing subnational democracy; within the framework of the CoE whose main mission is concerned with democracy, human rights and the rule of law, the Congress assumes responsibility for the subnational aspects of these values.

Finally, subnational authorities may need to address several routine issues with a local but cross-border scope, such as pollution affecting bordering regions but not whole countries. The relevance of cross-border 'housekeeping' is naturally much higher in the context of European integration. Under a strict system of national sovereignty, border control would be managed exclusively by national governments, but the absence of border controls in the Schengen Area creates both opportunities and necessities for cooperation among subnational authorities. While cooperation schemes such as the aforementioned Euroregions emerge also as a response to this kind of issues, the EU does more than removing the borders by actively encouraging cooperation through successive INTERREG programmes as part of its regional policy. As a further step, European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation (EGTC), a programme coordinated by CoR, 'allows public entities of different Member States to get together under a new entity with full legal personality', which is thereby significant in terms of its inclusion in the European legal

framework<sup>12</sup>. The first established EGTC, Eurometropolis Lille-Kortrijk-Tournai, seized this opportunity to create a territorial entity across the French-Belgian border, which is effectively almost a single metropolitan area, thus requiring close coordination between public authorities that cannot merge otherwise.

Neither INTERREG nor EGTC is limited to cross-border cooperation. Although such examples are used to highlight the above points, it should be noted that Euroregion schemes display a higher degree of diversity, including sector-based initiatives such as the Association of Ceramics Cities, or geography-based initiatives such as the Mediterranean Archipelagus. In the latter case, for example, in addition to broad economic factors discussed above, further bases of subnational motives can be found in geography, which is contingent on exogenous factors just like socio-cultural composition, and even more so. However, these exogenous factors are not highly variable over time, hence they do not really constitute *changing* motives for subnational actors; rather what changes is the possibilities of articulating and pursuing the interests which arise from them, that is, the opportunities of institutionalization.

Overall, the types of motives of subnational actors for engaging in multilevel politics which have been covered by existing studies are useful for a systematic understanding of the role of agency. However, as the examples presented in this subsection have tried to demonstrate, the agency of actors is more effective when it is in interplay with institutional innovation; new institutions may create new motives, may mobilise pre-existing bases of motives, or may be created from scratch based on predetermined motives. European institutions are of particular importance for multilevel politics, mostly thanks to the relaxation of the constraints posed by national borders and the legal framework within which a variety of cooperation schemes can operate. In light of this evidence, the present study will proceed with an approach focusing on the interactions between institutions and actors, which are most likely to manifest multilevel politics in an empirically observable way, as this indicates a high potential for a fruitful analysis.

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<sup>12</sup>This description is taken from the official website: <https://portal.cor.europa.eu/egtc> (last access: 18/04/2016). It is established by Regulation (EC) 1082/2006.

## **1.4 Explaining institutional effects:**

### **Research question and case selection**

This chapter has reviewed several bodies of literature which are developed to understand the rise of a new political system, conceptualized here as multilevel politics. This concept is understood as depicting, in an encompassing way, all political relations across multiple levels of government without serious impediment from the priority of the national level. In this sense, it is chosen to have a broader focus than the familiar concept of multilevel governance, since it does not narrowly focus on the practices emanating from the governance of the EU, which are mostly framed with regard to spontaneity, diversification, complexity and an overall fuzziness. Instead, the main motivation of this thesis is to advance an understanding of the systemic and more systematic features of this novel phenomenon.

For this purpose, three dimensions of the rise of multilevel politics are reviewed. First, at the European-political dimension, tracing the theories of European integration shows that European institutions have moved from a position of dependent variable to independent variable, and that contemporary studies are more appropriately focused on the outcomes of the institutions built by integration. However, multilevel governance embodies a tension between the complexity of emerging practices and a more stable institutional background; and when this latter institutional dimension is scrutinized, it is still concerned with the construction or the revision of institutions necessary for multilevel governance. Second, with a closer focus on the institutional context, the common institutional trends operate against the background of persisting variation in domestic structures, and the transnational channels reproduce this cross-national variation to a considerable extent. There are only a few institutions, such as the Committee of the Regions and the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, which embody the common trends of multilevel politics by representing subnational actors irrespectively of their domestic backgrounds. Finally, the dimension of actor motives shows that the interactions between actors and institutions constitute an important aspect of the rise of multilevel politics despite relative lack of attention to them.

In view of this last point, the institution-actor axis can be identified as the main direction in which the study of multilevel politics can be improved, and

this thesis will endeavour to do so. In addition, as discussed in the European-political dimension, the literature on multilevel governance is weaker with regard to understanding the effects of the political institutions, apart from the disordered governance practices. Combining these two observations about the relevant bodies of literature, the main purpose of this thesis is explaining institutional effects on actors. Among the studies cited in this chapter, the best example of such effects is expressed in Subsection 1.2.1 (p. 23) by the idea that the institutional outcomes of regionalization create regionalist actors who sustain the demand for reform. In order to extend this logic to the European scale, the remainder of this thesis will offer an answer, in the first place, to the following background question: does the existence of the institutions of multilevel politics create actors who are particularly disposed to further reform the European political system towards one of multilevel politics?

Given the significance of institutions which is apparent in the works reviewed here, one can reasonably expect an affirmative answer to this question. Alongside confirming such an answer empirically, the analytical objectives of this thesis will further include the explanations of the mechanisms which link the dependent variable, the attitudes of subnational actors, and the primary independent variable, institutional effects. In other words, the explanatory research question can be formulated as follows: how do the institutional effects on subnational actors lead to attitudes which are more favourably disposed to multilevel politics? As seen in Section 1.3, the institutions may generate novel actor motives, as much as they can help the better articulation and the pursuit of existing motives. In this sense, when answering this research question, institutional effects will be explicated in the form of both direct influence and the ability to meet expectations.

Finally, the logic of case selection is also derived from the literature reviewed in this chapter. Namely, among the plethora of transnational institutional channels, the Committee of the Regions and the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities stand out as organizations with the best capacity to embody the common institutional patterns of multilevel politics, as they do not depend on domestic competences of subnational authorities. In this sense, in the study of institutional effects, a special weight will be given to formal organizations, and particularly to these two. Following this logic, the Committee and the Congress will be examined in detail, both to illustrate the appropriateness of the theoretical approach in the

next chapter, and as case studies for empirical analysis. Moreover, the selection of one case from outside the EU will ensure that the focus on the systemic aspect of multilevel relations will be sufficiently differentiated from the governance practices of the EU.

## **Chapter 2**

# **Institutionalist theory of multilevel politics**

The purpose of this chapter is to develop a theory of multilevel politics which will unify its broader context with an empirical focus on the institution-actor axis. New institutionalism is selected as the most appropriate theoretical framework, not only because institutions have been shown to be central for understanding multilevel politics, but also because this framework is capable of highlighting the links between politics, institutions and actor motives. To begin with a sufficiently comprehensive definition of political institutions, they can be depicted as patterned higher order effects, including rules, standards and structurally determined factors, which can constrain, shape or constitute the behaviour of actors without necessarily repeated interventions, which endure over time, but which also evolve and adapt to changing circumstances (Ostrom, 1986, pp. 3-4; Clemens and Cook, 1999, pp. 444-445). In this sense, a new institutionalist conceptualization will draw on three major features of institutions: translating structural factors into patterned effects, relative stability in tandem with the ability of adaptation, and influence over actors.

This approach, as well as the above definition, covers formal and informal qualities of institutions. Organizations as physical entities can be seen as purposive and collective actors, hence distinct from institutions (North, 1990a, pp. 4-5; Young, 1986, p.108). However, this does not have to exclude organizations from an institutionalist study, as they are based on and generate institutional systems

within which their formal and informal characteristics become important determinants of political outcomes through interaction with individual actors (Zucker, 1987). Therefore, organizations or formal institutions constitute an important site of institutionalist study insofar as the distinction and the relationship between their actorness and institutional qualities are recognized. Informal institutions, on the other hand, stand for the rules which are socially accepted and shared without relying on codification (Helmke and Levitsky, 2004). In this sense, this chapter aims to develop a theory which is capable of taking into account both formal and informal institutions, and both formal and informal qualities of organizations. Yet the main focus will be on two formal institutions, the Committee of the Regions and the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, as the most crystallized and autonomous forms of institutionalized multilevel politics in Europe.

Taking stock of these conceptualizations and major claims of new institutionalism, institutionalization will be understood as the totality of three interconnected aspects: the emergence of specific institutions, their entrenchment in their larger context by adapting to structural conditions and actor expectations, and their ability to exert influence on actors in line with their designated functions. Therefore, a new-institutionalist framework will be developed to assess the origins, the evolution and the effects of institutions. It will be argued that multilevel politics are institutionalized by conforming to this framework, but empirical research is needed to ascertain the effects with regard to the relations between institutions and actors. In this respect, the first section below will lay down the general principles of new institutionalism and its suitability for the study of multilevel politics. Next, three successive sections will develop the argument by addressing the questions as to why institutions arise, how they evolve, and what they are expected to do. Each section will pay particular attention to the diversity of explanations offered within new institutionalism, and the implications of these explanations for the international and European environment of the institutions of multilevel politics. The chapter will conclude with a set of hypotheses on the influence of institutions on actors, to be tested through empirical research.



## 2.1 New institutionalism

The designation of institutionalism as ‘new’ suggests, first of all, a departure from an ‘old’ institutionalism<sup>1</sup>. What makes it new is the shift from an exclusive focus on formal institutions and the use of discursive methods to explicate them, towards a broader perspective on both formal and informal institutions and the use of the relative merits of discursive and scientific methods (Ethington and McDonagh, 1995). The methodological aspect of this shift results primarily from the changes in the scientific paradigm of politics. Namely, the transition from the old to the new institutionalism has followed a dialectic process mediated by behaviouralism: the latter was in opposition to old institutionalism with a view to substituting an exclusive focus on individual preferences for one on institutions, and a more scientifically motivated methodology for the discursive approach. New institutionalism is therefore a reaction to behaviouralism without a complete return to old ways, refusing the exclusion of institutions from social scientific study but incorporating relative merits from both perspectives (Immergut, 1998). In a similar vein, it is also a reaction to the virtually irreconcilable tension between social-determinist and behaviouralist accounts (ibid.). In this sense, new institutionalism is an approach which seeks flexibility between structural, institutional and individual levels of analysis, and in the direction of causality across these levels. Its core claim is that *institutions matter*; to supplement behaviouralism and social determinism, institutions matter as much as individual and structural factors, and to supplement old institutionalism, institutions matter alongside individual and structural factors.

Nonetheless, the answers offered by new institutionalist scholars on why institutions matter diverge to a considerable degree. For this reason, it is commonly accepted that new institutionalism is an umbrella term for three more specific approaches: historical institutionalism, rational choice institutionalism, and sociological institutionalism (Hall and Taylor, 1996). Despite apparent differences which cannot be easily bridged, in particular those at an epistemological level, there is room for a partial synthesis among the three strands of the approach, and where synthesis is not possible, for an eclectic approach. The next subsection will

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<sup>1</sup>While new institutionalism is purposively called ‘new’ to distinguish itself from its predecessors, the designation ‘old’ is only used retrospectively.

briefly present these strands, and discuss the possibility of adopting a broad new-institutionalist approach. From an eclectic perspective, the internal diversity of new institutionalism will therefore be taken as the source of possible complementarities within a common framework; even if different strands offer alternative or rival accounts, their integration into the explanatory model, rather than rejection through theoretical discussion, will decrease the risk of omitting relevant factors. The second subsection will discuss the suitability of new institutionalism for the study of international and European politics, and conclude that the capacity of this approach to tackle domestic and international problems alike makes it particularly well-suited to multilevel politics which erodes the separation of these two spheres. Finally, the three aspects of institutionalization (origins, evolution and effects), the three areas of discussion (theoretical underpinnings, European context and multilevel politics), and the three new-institutionalist approaches (historical, rational choice and sociological institutionalisms) will be organized into a unified framework.

### **2.1.1 New-institutionalist study of politics**

The fact that new institutionalism, with its three variants, is a prevalent theoretical framework for political science is subject to criticism on the basis of merely borrowing methods from economics and sociology instead of developing its own methods (Moe, 1991). More specifically, the premises of rational choice institutionalism are borrowed from economics as it is mainly concerned about collective action problems with rational actors, and explains institutions as the processes to solve these problems by reducing transaction costs of making collective decisions or deals (Hall and Taylor, 1996). Sociological institutionalism, on the other hand, understands institutions merely as reflections of cultural practices (*ibid.*). However, the spheres of politics, economy and society or culture cannot be separated in a straightforward and mutually exclusive way, thus a certain degree of permeability across respective academic disciplines is only natural. Moreover, politics is arguably the sphere whereby economic and socio-cultural factors are more likely to be co-determinate, hence a plurality of methods is necessary. In this respect, historical institutionalism comes forth as the most suitable variant to provide a mid-ground between rational choice and sociological approaches as

it incorporates both strategic calculations and cultural bases of action (Hall and Taylor, 1996; Hall, 2010).

In addition to economic and social factors which interact with politics, historical institutionalism also focuses on factors that are intrinsically political, namely power, and it attributes great importance to the distribution of power and resources by institutions among actors, offering this focus as one of its distinctive contributions to the institutionalist theory in general (Hall, 2010). In addition, historical institutionalism takes the form of an intermediate level theory, in view of accounting for the mediation of macro-structural effects on individuals' behaviour and individuals' feedback to systemic conditions (Thelen and Steinmo, 1992). In this sense, it is capable of linking the institution-actor axis with broader political questions. Therefore, from the aforementioned strands, historical institutionalism constitutes the best starting point for political analysis with respect to the incorporation of diverse perspectives, emphasis on power distribution, and intermediate-level theoretical explanations.

In this context, the theoretical framework which will be developed here will take historical institutionalism as the starting point, but advance its eclectic nature by paying closer attention to rationalist and cultural components, thus by also integrating the distinctive contributions of rational choice and sociological institutionalisms. While aligning the methodology and the ontology of political analysis is an essential task of a theoretical approach (Hall, 2003), the main difficulty lies in aligning two sets of internally consistent accounts with each other against the background of their diverging ontologies, which is most notably manifested in their respective conceptions of individual preferences. Namely, rational choice assumes objectively defined preferences which rational actors pursue and explains institutions in terms of enabling more efficient pursuit of diverse interests, whereas sociological institutionalism assumes that preferences are socially constructed and that the role of institutions pertains to this construction. In other words, the questions as to whether or not preferences are exogenous or endogenous, and whether or not institutions are instrumental or constitutive demarcate the line between rationalist and sociological perspectives.

An eclectic integration of two perspectives is possible, first, through a division of functions between them for different issues, different aspects of the same issues, different stages of a causal sequence, differences of generality and specificity, etc.

(March and Olsen, 1998). For instance, strategic and cultural factors can be operationalized into variables that can be tested together, the formation of preferences can be explained sociologically, while the pursuit of interests rationalistically, or rationalist and cultural explanations can be found usefully relative to each other in different cases. Second, as for the possibility of closing the gap between their ontologies to the extent possible, it can be remarked that rational choice does not have to be limited to instrumental rationality assumptions and can indeed incorporate elements such as culture, symbols, norms, etc. (Thelen, 1999). A prominent example of this kind of rapprochement is the understanding of mental models and ideologies as cognitive templates which process complex information from the social environment and render it useful for social action, akin to the understanding of institutions from a rational choice perspective which emphasizes the facilitation of collective action in a complex environment of preferences through the provision of necessary information (Denzau and North, 1994).

The possibilities and limits of a synthesis between sociological and rationalist perspectives are beyond the scope of the present discussion, yet the plausibility of their complementarity and possible grounds of intersection suggest that developing a new institutionalist theory does not necessarily require an ontologically motivated choice among mutually exclusive alternative accounts. Instead, starting with historical institutionalism as the best possible common ground and the most adept strand for the study of politics, the relative merits of rational choice and sociological perspectives will provide the bases of the plurality of insights which will be applied to all stages of the explanatory framework in this thesis. More specifically, all strands of new institutionalism will inform the construction of a narrative of the institutionalization of multilevel politics with respect to the origins and the evolution of institutions, and the hypotheses which will lay the groundwork for ensuing empirical research.

### **2.1.2 New-institutionalist study of European politics**

New institutionalism is recognized as an approach suitable for studying both domestic and international institutions. For the latter, the main focus of the early research has been on the functioning of organizations, mostly with models and methods borrowed from the analysis of domestic deliberative and bureaucratic or-

ganizations (Martin and Simmons, 1998). More contemporary research by liberal institutionalists<sup>2</sup> and regime theorists has shifted the focus from organizations to more informal aspects, and from institutional effects to the creation and persistence of regimes/institutions. Consequently, international institutions are understood as both independent and dependent variables, and both causes and effects, simultaneously (*ibid.*; Keohane and Martin, 1995). Therefore, the institutionalist study of international politics is in line with the breadth of the framework proposed above, with regard to combining formal and informal, rationalist and sociological, and endogenous and exogenous aspects.

This understanding is actually highlighted by theories of international regimes. The basic definition of international regimes is formulated as ‘sets of implicit or explicit principles, norms, rules, and decision-making procedures around which actors’ expectations converge in a given area of international relations’ (Krasner, 1982*b*, p.186), and refined as ‘social institutions consisting of agreed upon principles, norms, rules, procedures and programs, that govern the interactions of actors in specific issue areas’ (Levy, Young and Zürn, 1995, p.274). Thereby, regimes have a rather informal character, mediate actors’ behaviour, and are issue-specific. This conceptualization distinguishes regimes not only from international organizations as physical entities and actors, but also from the international political structure which is valid across all issue areas, and world order in general which is the sum of all institutional arrangements (*ibid.*).

While regime theory has made a significant contribution to the study of international institutions by drawing attention to informal aspects, institutionalist approaches to international politics do not have to be limited to these, but can be developed to re-include formal aspects as well. For this purpose, with a less restrictive definition, international institutions stand for general patterns of behaviour as well as specific arrangements which are persistent over time and which prescribe, shape and constrain behaviour (Keohane, 1988). According to this definition, international institutions can include formal international organizations with specific rules, procedures and hierarchies. While these institutions constitute a suitable subject for a rationalistic approach as mechanisms reducing the

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<sup>2</sup>Liberal institutionalism has also been discussed as a general theory of international politics in Chapter 1, and as the major representative of the liberal camp of contemporary theoretical debates. Its discussion in this chapter refers mostly to the details of the institutionalist aspect of the theory, rather than its position as a liberal theory of international politics.

transaction cost of cooperation, the study of institutions could be improved by considering them together with general patterns or regimes, incorporating relative merits of sociological approaches, and taking history seriously (*ibid.*), hence by developing an eclectic new-institutionalist approach that addresses origins and evolution as well.

As for European integration, it can be seen as a special case of international institutional architecture which displays radical departures from traditional forms of international politics. New institutionalism is also proposed as a necessary and useful perspective to study European politics. This is especially true with regard to the transition from theories borrowed from international relations to those borrowed from comparative politics, as discussed in the previous chapter. While the emergence of European institutions with autonomous leverage calls for a study of these very institutions, new institutionalism can also help to bridge the apparent divide between international relations and comparative politics, as no fundamental differentiation between domestic and international spheres is necessary when analysing the category of institution (Jupille and Caporaso, 1999).

Furthermore, integration theories were criticized for proposing explanations in stark rivalry with one another, while they were interested in different aspects of the same phenomenon which could be understood as complementary (Puchala, 1971). In a similar way, the multi-faceted nature of institutionalism approaches different aspects of political reality, and an eclectic institutionalist account would be able to provide an overarching picture of European integration and its political consequences (Jupille and Caporaso, 1999). However, institutionalism can be considered as more closely coupled with neo-functionalist theory and based on assumptions which contradict those of intergovernmentalism (Puchala, 1999), as well as based on a critique or a re-interpretation of intergovernmentalist claims (Jupille and Caporaso, 1999).

For instance, the historical institutionalist critique of intergovernmentalism puts forward the following themes that the latter fails to address accurately: the autonomy of supra-national institutions, short time horizons and changing preferences of national political actors, unintended consequences of seemingly insignificant political decisions, supra-national political actors becoming increasingly powerful over time, and the difficulty of radical reform in political institutions mainly due to the high costs of reversing institutional processes (Pierson,

1996). Therefore, a historical institutionalist account of European integration departs from intergovernmentalism in terms of relaxing the assumptions of national sovereignty as immune to any change, institutions as merely instrumental, and institution making moments—grand bargains—as determinative of the integration in its entirety (*ibid.*). Especially with respect to the last implication, the processes between critical junctures, namely treaty making, are as important as these moments, and should be explained from a perspective of evolutionary or incremental change (Bulmer, 1998).

On the other hand, an institutionalist re-interpretation of intergovernmentalism can be developed insofar as the primacy of national governments is not challenged at the outset. Despite this primacy, however, European institutions can be shown to exert autonomous influence for several reasons (Pollack, 1996, 1997). First, the actors representing European institutions can shape the stability and change of the institutional structure, for instance by participating in the treaty making processes albeit without formal powers. Second, they can exploit the divergence of preferences between member states as well as their imperfect sanction and control mechanisms on supra-national agents leading to a situation of lock-in whereby the status quo cannot be easily changed. Third, they can create opportunities to override individual government preferences through qualified majority voting<sup>3</sup>.

Overall, not only international and European institutions constitute units of analysis amenable to a new institutionalist study with an eclectic character as proposed above, but also the institutionalist analysis of international and European politics helps to transcend several analytical divides which are unable to capture the specificities of multilevel politics, since the latter operates through the permeability of domestic and international spheres and the institutions of multilevel politics do not have to be exclusively domestic or international. Moreover, multilevel politics originates from and acts upon its international and European context; in this sense, the explanation of the origins, evolution and effects of the institutions of multilevel politics requires a solid understanding of international and European institutions at large, which will be discussed as the contextual background in each section to follow.

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<sup>3</sup>The significance of institutional mechanisms which explain these features will be examined in more detail in the Subsection 2.3.2 below.

### 2.1.3 New-institutionalist study of multilevel politics

To sum up the logic leading to the theoretical framework so far, first, the analytical focus of this thesis is set as the institutional dimension of multilevel politics on the basis of the literature reviewed in the previous chapter. In this sense, not only does new institutionalism emerge as the obvious choice in contemporary social science for studying institutions, but it also has great potential for explaining important aspects of multilevel politics: On the one hand, new institutionalism in general, and historical institutionalism in particular as a common ground for all theoretical strands, are shown to be strong and rich perspectives to approach political institutions; on the other hand, they are capable of addressing the intertwining of domestic and international spheres through multilevel politics. Yet several specifications and qualifications of the theoretical framework are in order.

First, historical institutionalism is fundamentally concerned with the temporal aspects of institutionalization, whereas the empirical focus of this thesis is placed on institutional effects on actors at a given point in time. In order to develop a complete account of institutionalization and achieve the empirical objectives at the same time, this chapter will discuss the historical aspects, namely institutional origins and evolution, and conclude with hypotheses on institutional effects that will guide the empirical research project. In other words, the remainder of the thesis will exclusively advance an empirical account of the effects of the institutions of multilevel politics as both the outcome and a crucial mechanism of institutionalization, provided that their historical background conforms to the theoretical framework of institutionalization in terms of origins and evolution, as discussed in the subsequent sections of this chapter. Thereby, the overall framework has the shape of historical institutionalism, proceeding through institutional origins, evolution and effects, although the empirical part of the thesis will be concerned with the effects only at a given time.

Second, another important feature of historical institutionalism, which also applies broadly to new institutionalism, is being a mid-level theory, by understanding institutions as intermediaries between structural factors and actor behaviour. This will require the theoretical framework to account for the wider environment of the institutions of multilevel politics, which will be done by discussing European institutions prior to multilevel politics. In this way, the discussion of the institutions



of multilevel politics will help us to understand where they come from and the system which they reshape. Furthermore, this strategy will have a practical advantage in that useful guidelines for exploring the institutions of multilevel politics can be derived from both abstract theoretical arguments of new institutionalism and the arguments of existing studies on European institutions. For these reasons, the three sections that follow in this chapter will examine theoretical underpinnings, European institutions and the application of these to multilevel politics respectively.

Third, historical institutionalism does not preclude either rational choice or sociological institutionalism, and for this reason, it is taken here as the common ground of an eclectic new institutionalism. However, in order to enhance its eclectic quality, the following discussions will pay special attention to arguments which are distinctively rationalist and cultural; subsections on theoretical underpinnings, European institutions and multilevel politics with regard to institutional origins, evolution and effects will all contain explanations from rationalist and cultural accounts. In this sense, such an eclecticism will be achieved by feeding rational choice and sociological institutionalism into the content of the broader historical institutionalist framework. However, historical institutionalism is larger than the sum of the other two; in order not to lose sight of the distinctively historical-institutionalist propositions, these will be integrated into the introductory statements of each section. For example, the sections on origins will begin with the role of historical context, the evolution with stability-change dialectic and path-dependency, and effects with the distribution of power and resources. The historical-institutionalist explanation will not then be exhausted at the stage of empirical research design, as it will still be relevant for generic institutional influence and the dispersion of authority.

Finally, drawing an account of the institutions of multilevel politics requires the specification of what these institutions are. However, as discussed in the previous chapter, the institutional architecture of multilevel politics is characterized by persisting variations in domestic structures, and the multiplicity of transnational channels which reproduce this cross-national variation to a certain extent. Instead of attempting to account for all possible types of relevant institutions, the emphasis of the following sections of this chapter will be on the selected cases, namely the Committee of the Regions and the Congress of Local and Regional Authori-

ties, which display a crystallized embodiment of multilevel politics thanks to their higher capacity to minimize the effects of national differences.

Therefore, the framework for the institutionalist theory of multilevel politics will be unpacked in the following sections which will show that multilevel politics displays conformity with new-institutionalist approaches regarding origins, evolution and effects; features which have parallels with and complement the institutional architecture of European politics; and characteristics which pertain to rationalist and cultural accounts. In this sense, multilevel politics in Europe will be said to be institutionalized. However, the empirical part of the thesis will focus on institutional effects and particularly the influence of institutions over actors at a given time. In empirical terms, as discussed in the last chapter, this is the most understudied aspect of multilevel politics, which is probably because it requires a large amount of data. In theoretical terms, this is also the weakest aspect of historical institutionalism (Hall and Taylor, 1996). For these reasons, the chapter will conclude by employing all strands of new institutionalism to derive hypotheses that will guide the empirical research which will complement the narrative of institutionalization by substantiating the theoretical presupposition that institutions of multilevel politics indeed influence actor behaviour.

## **2.2 Institutional origins of multilevel politics**

For understanding where institutions come from, the obvious explanation lies in their historical contexts. However, the historical context of an institution is presumed to be characterized by already existing institutions. Thereby, the study of one institution is not complete without taking into account the relevant institutions which determine the structural conditions of a society or polity at the time of its inception. In order to ensure that historical institutionalist analysis does not regress almost infinitely deeper into history, the institutional setting at one point in time should be taken as given or exogenous to the analysis. With a view to deciding an appropriate starting point, one can look at ‘punctuated equilibria’ which explain the cycles of institutional reproduction and evolution that are only disrupted by contingent moments of crisis or critical junctures (Krasner, 1984). The most significant critical juncture in recent political history of Europe, leading to a radical institutional restructuring, is arguably the Second World War, the end of which set

into motion several dynamics which paved the way for multilevel politics. The aim of this section is deciphering such dynamics, following a discussion of the theoretical underpinnings of the literature on institutional origins.

### **2.2.1 Rationalist and cultural accounts of institutional origins**

The rationalist explanations of institutional origins focus on collective action problems; as certain equilibria of collective decisions which occur in reality seem theoretically impossible to predict, institutions are introduced as higher order factors which make such equilibria possible (Riker, 1980). Therefore, the genesis of an institution is in itself a collective decision which facilitates the processes of reaching further decisions; and an institution is created insofar as actors have a strong stake in the value that it will generate, that is, being able to reach collective decisions which are otherwise impossible or very difficult. In economic terms, an institution is a particular form of equilibrium in a game—the pre-institutional context—and given its endurance, it is a recurrent equilibrium in a repeated game (Calvert, 1995; Schotter, 1981).

In this sense, institutions are selected on the basis of their presumed effects, but it is not always possible to explain institutional origins through pure functionalism directly in relation to the effects (Moe, 1990). Instead, an analytical separation is needed between theories of institutions which explain the institutions themselves by taking them as endogenous, and institutional theories which explain effects by taking stable rules as parametric or exogenous (Diermeier and Krehbiel, 2003; Shepsle, 1989). In other words, the examination of institutional origins should focus on the adoption of institutions in view of higher order rules, while the examination of more ordinary collective decisions in view of lower level institutional rules should be left to the analysis of institutional effects (Ostrom, 1986).

The rationalist assumptions about the pre-institutional environment consist of costly and imperfect information and feedback, insufficient enforcement of agreements, and erroneous subjective models or cognitive templates (North, 1990a, p. 16). Therefore, institutions emerge in order to reduce the transaction cost of improving information flow and communication, ensure the enforcement of agreements, and correct subjective models; in short, to reduce the uncertainty of political markets (North, 1990b). This pre-institutional environment does not

have to be one of institutional vacuum; the creation of new institutions will very probably utilize existing institutional channels. Yet the need to create a new institution indicates the inadequacy or insufficiency of such channels, which render the transaction costs of addressing the issues which are put into the political agenda considerably high, so much so that the willingness to reduce this cost will outweigh the reluctance to bear the cost of creating a new institution. In this case, although new institutional arrangements will not necessarily be perfect, they will be highly preferable to the pre-institutional situation.

While rational choice institutionalism thus portrays the inception of an institution as a deliberate improvement to the existing imperfections, sociological institutionalism draws attention to an alternative explanation by deconstructing the distinction between an institution and its context of inception, that is, the socio-cultural structure. The main sociological explanation is thereby institutional isomorphism which predicts the replication of existing social and cultural norms and symbols through new institutions (Scott, 1995; DiMaggio and Powell, 1983). The main difficulty in this approach is related to explaining why isomorphic institutions arise if they do not add anything to the existing environment. One compelling claim is that they can serve the purpose of increasing legitimacy (Hall and Taylor, 1996). In contrast to the rational choice approach which puts forward increased efficiency as the major contribution of a new institution, the focus of sociological institutionalism is on legitimacy which does not necessarily follow efficiency. In fact, the social construction of an institution is a factor which can explain the inefficiencies of institutions, as it ensures the perception of institutions and socio-cultural norms as legitimate, even if they do not constitute an efficient form of social organization.

In this respect, the following subsections will explain the foundation of the institutions of multilevel politics in view of what made their inception necessary and possible within their historical context. The rationalist account will point out the pre-existing institutional setting, in particular its imperfections and high transaction costs with regard to imminent political issues, as the parameters of institutional genesis which are distinct from institutional characteristics. The sociological account will suggest explanation based on how central features of this setting are ingrained in newly generated institutions. Therefore, the institutions of multilevel politics are founded to reform and refine their international and European

environment, while this environment is shaped in a similar way by international and European institutions which reformed and refined earlier contexts.

### **2.2.2 Origins of European institutions**

The regime theory of international politics makes an important modification to the rationalistic account of institutional origins: while a new institution is an equilibrium in a high-order game with respect to the given distribution of preferences and capabilities, which is preferable to its prior arrangement or the lack thereof, it is not necessarily the only possible equilibrium but one among many (Krasner, 1991). In other words, irrespective of the degree of optimality of its prior context, the formation of an institution primarily represents stabilization along a line of Pareto-optimal points (*ibid.*). Although this conception seems to suggest a fragile equilibrium since there exist other equally preferable possibilities, history is evidently not marked by institutional instability which alters continuously between optimal equilibria. Above all, this is because the formation of an institution is more compelling than the maintenance of an existing institution; thus, once established, radically reforming or destroying an institution entails much higher costs (Levy, Young and Zürn, 1995; Keohane and Nye, 1977; Keohane, 2012). In this sense, the moment of genesis determines an important part of institutional characteristics.

One remaining question, however, is concerned with the factors behind the location of the stabilization along a line of optimal equilibria, unless this is completely contingent. In the light of theoretical discussions presented above, the rationalist account would draw attention to the parameters shaped by pre-existing institutions, and the cultural account would put forward isomorphism. Thereby, the explanation that can be confirmed by different variants of institutionalist theory would suggest that the formation of an institution will represent a chain of inter-institutional continuity as well as the beginning of an intra-institutional stability. On the other side, this tendency also suggests that any departure from continuity is a strong sign that the underlying conditions of institutions make the pre-existing system unsustainable.

The institutionalization of multilevel politics is a difficult process primarily because the international and European environment is shaped by the remnants

of preceding institutional arrangements, but its very existence indicates a need in this environment. Most notably, multilevel politics is a challenge for sovereignty at both sub-national and supra-national levels, as the latter implies that any authority below the nation state cannot have an independent foreign policy, and any authority outside or above the national state cannot have an independent influence within its borders. However, this is a difficult challenge when sovereignty shapes general behavioural patterns of international politics and manifests itself in many or all of formal institutions pertaining to both national and international orders, for instance, the constitutions of the nation states, or the basic principles of the United Nations (Keohane, 1988). In other words, a critical juncture such as the Second World War was not sufficient to do away with national sovereignty in the postwar settlement and in the new international organizations.

Nonetheless, if the persistence of the traditional conception of sovereignty is primarily a result of institutional inertia, then the institutional arrangements based on this conception are likely to become suboptimal responses to changing structural conditions (Krasner, 1988). In this respect, while international institutions embody the structural conditions of their time of foundation, this embodiment easily lags behind changing conditions such as those which have been discussed in the previous chapter in view of territorial rescaling. On the other hand, the developments which reproduce national sovereignty in new institutions are also responsible for institutions which transform or undermine it. For instance, European states, which had historically diffused the original idea of sovereignty, now operate in a system of ‘pooled sovereignty’ as opposed to the United States which has become the primary defender of the traditional version (Keohane, 2002). The European Union, whose establishment as well as deepening and enlargement followed traditional procedures of international treaty making, is the location of this pooling. Irrespective of whether this was a rescue or the beginning of the end of the nation state, it clearly represents an ‘innovative institutional thinking’ capable of shaping its structural conditions (*ibid.*). To a lesser extent, the Council of Europe, which conforms to a more traditional understanding of intergovernmental organization, is the result of earlier postwar attempts of enhancing European cooperation through institution building and an institutional embodiment of European society of states (Heinrich, 2010; Stivachtis and Habegger, 2011). In addition, it has adopted a value-driven role, focusing on the rule of law, democracy and hu-

man rights, which is an unorthodox way of international politics as it conflates domestic and international spheres with respect to the basic principles of political organization (Kicker, 2010).

These developments testify to the fact that the need for cooperation and integration transcending national borders was evident in the mid-century restructuring of international and European politics. Yet the preceding structural conditions made the reproduction of national sovereignty more preferable to otherwise equally plausible alternative arrangements. The widening gap between increasing transnational interdependence and older forms of international and European institutions lays the ground for emerging institutions of multilevel politics, as the transaction cost of reforming old institutions become more bearable in the face of their inefficiency, and as the legitimacy of old institutions become more questionable in the face of changing perceptions of politics and the role of values in international politics.

### **2.2.3 Origins of the institutions of multilevel politics**

The origins of the institutions of multilevel politics can thus be found, first, in the cooperative characteristics of postwar international organizations, and second, the increasing feasibility of institutional reform due to changing structural conditions. Focusing on the Committee of the Regions and the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, the discussion of institutional origins should take into account their parent organizations, the European Union and the Council of Europe, which play an important role in the constitutive characteristics of such institutions.

To begin with the Council of Europe (CoE), its internal organization and value-driven activities will also be found in the Congress. The decision making body of CoE, the Committee of Ministers is composed of the ministers of foreign affairs or diplomatic representatives of member states. In this respect, it does not signify a fundamental departure from traditional intergovernmental relations. Nonetheless, other bodies of CoE have a more integrative nature. For instance, the European Court of Human Rights supervises national judiciaries, hence integrates domestic and international legal systems within a common human rights law. The Parliamentary Assembly comprises members of national parliaments, proportionally taking into account both internal political divisions of members states and

the population of each country. Therefore, it constitutes a pan-European assembly bridging domestic and international politics. The Congress follows the same logic in creating a European assembly out of local and regional authorities.

The establishment of the Conference of Local Authorities of Europe, the predecessor of the Congress, in 1957, only eight years after the CoE, stands witness to the fact that the roots of multilevel politics can be found in the early years of postwar restructuring. Its current statute as a permanent body of the CoE after 1994 shows that local and regional tiers have become an integral part of European politics beyond national constitutions. These developments are a corollary of a transformation which made democracy a key issue of European politics, as opposed to being an exclusively domestic issue immune to international scrutiny. In this sense, the Congress promotes local and regional self-government as an indispensable aspect of democracy and European values, and the idea that a pan-European assembly of subnational political actors should champion these values<sup>4</sup>.

In the case of the Committee of the Regions, its origins cannot be observed so directly in mid-century political developments. Yet it originates from European integration triggered by the postwar restructuring. European Union, the Nobel Peace Prize laureate in 2012, achieved a long period of peaceful relations in Europe by entrenching interdependency through economic and political integration. Economic integration necessitated territorial cohesion, and given that disparities in the degree of development existed within each member state, equitable development had to be targeted at the subnational level. This idea of regional development policies had long been in place since the Treaty of Rome, but its formal creation and systematic implementation have been possible only from 1970s onwards. Especially in the late 1980s, the culmination of a greater need for cohesion following successive enlargements and special importance attached to regions during the strong Commission presidency of Jacques Delors brought sub-national actors to the core of the European political arena<sup>5</sup>. As structural funds have received a significant part of the EU budget, direct relations between sub-national actors

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<sup>4</sup>Such a self-depiction is apparent in the official website of the Congress, where it is defined by the expressions 'a pan-European political assembly' and 'the guarantor of local and regional democracy in Europe', and its role is defined as 'to promote local and regional democracy, improve local and regional governance and strengthen authorities' self-government' (CLRAE, 2016a).

<sup>5</sup>These factors are also counted among the reasons for a need to theorize multilevel political relations since early discussions of multilevel governance (Marks, 1993)



and European bodies have become common practice and the institutionalization of these relations within the EU have naturally ensued.

Just like economic integration entails political integration, the inclusion of subnational actors extends beyond the cohesion policy to political decision making in general. Subnational authorities implement decisions taken in national and European levels, and their inclusion in these processes increases both the legitimacy and efficiency of decisions. In other words, as sovereignty is pooled at the European level, subnational authorities increasingly deal with this new locus of sovereignty. The institutional origins of CoR can thus be found in the changing political system of Europe through integration in general, and in the rise of cohesion policy in importance in particular. For this reason, CoR was established at a time when integration reached a significant level of maturity, as embodied in Maastricht Treaty which established the European Union as such, and when territorial cohesion became one of the most important policy areas. It was given an advisory status, and its role has been providing input to the EU legislative processes, especially in areas which directly concern the subnational level of government. Therefore, instituting CoR can be interpreted as a direct response to the need to enhance the efficiency and legitimacy of European decision making by including representatives of subnational authorities thereto<sup>6</sup>.

To conclude, the origins of the institutions of multilevel politics, as exemplified by CLRAE and CoR, can be traced to the postwar restructuring of European politics. The formal institutionalization of European political cooperation through CoE, and the internationalization of political values such as the rule of law, democracy and human rights, provide a normative basis for multilevel politics in the Congress. Equitable development against the background of economic integration requires action at subnational level across Europe, while the pooling of sovereignty in an emerging Euro-polity requires action at the supranational level on the part of subnational authorities. The result is the institutionalized inclusion of subnational actors in European decision making processes through CoR. Overall, a configuration of several factors are relevant to the origins of the institutions: CoR and CLRAE can be expected to display institutional characteristics which

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<sup>6</sup>Another way to understand this interpretation is to look at what CoR is meant to do. For example, several recent assessments of CoR, as discussed in the previous chapter, draw attention to effective channelling of subnational interests into the institutional architecture of the EU as an area of strength for CoR (Piattoni, 2010a) or as part of its identity (Domorenok, 2009).

embody the changing nature of political norms and values, and the need for new mechanisms to enhance the efficiency and the legitimacy of political processes in the face of a shifting distribution of power across levels of government.

### 2.3 Institutional evolution of multilevel politics

The primary reason as to why institutional origins determine a considerable part of institutional features is that institutions display a significant degree of stability by reproducing their existing features. However, it should be remarked that institutions can also display a certain degree of adaptability to changing structural conditions or actor behaviour. In this sense, institutional evolution can be analysed through two different historical institutionalist approaches: one that separates change and continuity by understanding an institution as the period of continuity between critical junctures which constitute the main source of change<sup>7</sup>, and another one that conflates change and continuity, by focusing on incremental change driven by actors, which ensures relative stability in the longer term. The key determinant of change and stability in both approaches is the strength of compliance with institutions by the actors.

To understand institutional stability, the fundamental rationalist explanation is that compliance with institutions is more beneficial to actors than defection, and the fundamental cultural explanation is that institutions constitute the basis of actions, and for this reason, challenging them is not usually envisaged as a plausible option (Hall and Taylor, 1996). To understand institutional change, compliance should be taken as variable, especially through the openness of interpretation and implementation of institutional rules (Mahoney and Thelen, 2010). In this respect, institutional change is possible not only through sudden and large scale events such as ‘displacement’ with new institutions and rules or ‘drift’ with external shocks, but also through more gradual processes such as ‘layering’ with the addition of new institutions and rules or ‘conversion’ with changing interpretation and enactment (*ibid.*).

While critical junctures and institutional origins set in motion the reproduction of certain characteristics, fundamental transformations do not have to await

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<sup>7</sup>One of the best expressions of this approach can be found in regime theories which have been discussed in preceding sections.

new junctures, but can occur as a result of accumulated incremental change, even if this has been a function of the institutional continuity so far. Layering is a particularly crucial form of enhancing long term stability by changing an institution or a system of institutions: an overall transformation occurs as each added layer decreases the importance of existing ones, but the total rising number of layers also increases the complexity which make further institutional change more difficult than before (Boas, 2007). Therefore, endogenous forms of institutional change are more likely to result in more entrenched and stronger systems. From a broader perspective, the institutionalization of multilevel politics is a form of layering to the European institutional architecture, and the self-reinforcing qualities of the institutions of multilevel politics not only imply their entrenchment in the European political system, but also contribute to the very stability of the latter.

### **2.3.1 Rationalist and cultural accounts of institutional evolution**

The historical institutionalist debate on the evolution of institutions suggests a dialectic pattern of self-preservation and adaptation. The main source of stability is conceptualized as 'path dependence' which designates a reactive sequence of causally connected events, started by a breakpoint in history and following logical connections (Mahoney, 2000). The historical trajectory of an institution is characterized by a contingent starting point and a deterministic pattern (*ibid.*). Path dependence often results from increasing returns, that is, the increasing cost of reversing institutional paths chosen at previous stages, which makes institutional change more difficult over time, and which probably leads to suboptimal outcomes (Arthur, 1994, pp. 112-113). This primarily economic conception of institutional stability is even stricter in the political sphere: political institutions are more prone to path dependence as politics is more concerned with public goods hence collective decisions, as political authority is centralized in a way that precludes the use of alternative institutional channels, and as power asymmetries are central to political processes and reproduced by the institutions which privilege the powerful (Pierson, 2000*a,b*).

One problem with this type of stability is that enduring institutions can easily become socially inefficient, because rational actors choose compliance when

it is more profitable, hence institutional reinforcement through increasing returns (North, 1990*b*). Although institutions represent equilibria for collective decision making, they are usually unstable arrangements whereby inherent disequilibria reveal themselves only in the long run (Riker, 1980). In this context, change is possible when the inefficiency of an institution becomes more apparent and when incentives to depart from such an equilibrium are strong. If actors think that they would be better off with alternative institutions and that the costs of altering institutions are bearable, new incentive structures will result in institutional change (North, 1990*a*, p. 86). On the other hand, the social inefficiency of an institution may be due to the fact that it is benefiting actors with higher bargaining power (*ibid.*, p. 16). In this case, an evolution towards efficiency can be achieved if the interests of the powerful are overlapping with more efficient arrangements, provided that the transaction cost of change is decreasing together with this overlap (*ibid.*, p. 69).

If and when these conditions of change are met, institutional evolution can occur through mechanisms inherent to the institutions themselves. One way of conceptualizing these mechanisms is to focus on the rules of institutional change which are relatively more stable over time and which determine the transformation of more specific and variable rules (Shepsle, 1989). Therefore, even if the parameters of an institution are the subject of a higher level bargaining, such parameters may include rules that allow institutional change without resorting to a redefinition of institutions. In this sense, when institutional characteristics are 'quasi-parameters', which are not subject to continuous scrutiny yet which can be revised through mechanisms inherent to the institutions, endogenous institutional change is likely to occur (Greif and Laitin, 2004). Thus, quasi-parameters are the source of both long-term adaptability and short term stability, which is capable of ensuring self-reinforcement through evolution.

In contrast to this dynamic understanding of the rationalist account, for sociological institutionalism, institutional change is analogous to social change, or contingent on wider change in the environment of an institution, and only parallel to a broader historical trajectory, while 'history follows a less determinate, more endogenous course' (March and Olsen, 1996, p.255). In the course of history, the fate of political institutions depends on several factors including the identities of actors and collectivities, the distribution of capabilities, the interpretation of

events and history, and the adaptability to the environment (*ibid.*). By the same token, institutions evolve to the extent that identities, power distributions, templates for interpretation, and structural conditions change. Sociological institutionalism focuses on the analysis of supra-individual units as distinct from the aggregation of individuals (Powell and DiMaggio, 1991, p.8). This structuralist approach is the main source of the criticism for losing sight of individual agency, especially in terms of explaining change (Hall and Taylor, 1996). Taking stock of this criticism, institutional transformation and stability can be explicated by broadening the perspective to include actor feedback to supra-individual units or structural conditions, as well as by taking sociological factors such as political identification and cognitive templates as variable.

Overall, endurance is one of the main qualities of institutions, as compliance becomes more and more beneficial once an institution is established. Even in this case, changing incentive structures of all actors or the more powerful main beneficiaries necessitate some institutional alterations, and the inherent adaptability of institutions facilitates the process. The sociological account of institutional evolution is more conservative, as institutions reflect their social conditions of existence, and social change is slow and infrequent. Nonetheless, the latter still offers useful insights in view of cultural factors, since identities and cognitive templates can complement rationalistic explanations.

### **2.3.2 Evolution of European institutions**

International politics displays a low degree of transformation as compared to domestic politics. As the above discussions on sovereignty show, for several centuries, international relations have been functioning through more or less the same basic norms, whereas domestic political structures have been fundamentally transformed. However, the slow pace of change does not necessarily mean full resilience. To the extent that international institutions conform to the theoretical accounts of institutional evolution, understanding the patterns of incremental reform and the complex relations between reproduction and innovation offers useful insights for the study of international politics (Fioretos, 2011). The intensification of international institutionalization following postwar reconstruction indicates a

considerable degree of accumulated change in the international political system since then.

The stability of institutions from mid-century onwards despite changing conditions of world politics shows that institutions matter beyond the mere representation of the underlying system<sup>8</sup>. The most notable example of this is NATO which is fundamentally an organization emanating from the Cold War environment. However, not only does the relevance of NATO continue even today, but it has also expanded its membership base; NATO has not ceased to exist simply because the reason for its foundation ceased to exist, but it adapted to the circumstances of the world politics after the Cold War (Keohane and Martin 1995, cf. Mearsheimer 1994). The same logic can also be applied to the EEC-EU and the CoE since economic and political cooperation in Western Europe was seen as part of the Cold War alliance, although their links to the Cold War environment are not as direct as the security concerns embodied by NATO. Similarly, not only did they survive the end of the Cold War, but also they extended their membership to Central and Eastern Europe while the EU proceeded to further stages of integration before and after the end of the Cold War.

As the most innovative of international organizations, the major characteristics of the EU matter a great deal in terms of explaining the patterns of stability and change. Considering that the EU has been established and reformed on several occasions through international treaties, its dynamics of change and stability rely heavily on extra-institutional processes or higher-order bargains. However, the ordinary functioning of the EU is equally a source of its evolution in the form of autonomous entrenchment and self-strengthening, hence an endogenous change.

To illustrate autonomous stability, the concept of 'joint decision traps' (Scharpf, 1988) explains the double difficulty of going forwards and backwards. In particular, it shows the inherent tendency of European institutions towards suboptimal outcomes in the form of sticking to the baseline of the status quo as the lowest common denominator instead of devising more effective arrangements (*ibid.*). While European institutions are difficult to reform in this sense, the existence of joint decision traps at the core of the EU decision making also means that they

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<sup>8</sup>This can be seen as institutional inertia which proves the relative autonomy of international institutions, but this autonomy can be a vehicle of conservation as much as reform. The relevant implication for the present discussion is survival through adaptation, as institutional adjustments will be telling about larger scale changes to which institutions should adapt.

are difficult to reverse as well; since the current stage of integration constitutes the status quo, a return to traditional forms of international relations in Europe is quite unlikely. Moreover, this path dependent stability of European institutions can be complemented by the idea of accumulated potential for evolution, as repeated traps are posited to bring about institutional refinement, through large scale if not gradual adjustment (*ibid.*, p. 271). For instance, transition to qualified majority voting in the Council of the EU in an increased number of areas can be seen as a major example of institutional adjustment, since joint decision traps occur more frequently due to the requirement of unanimity while bargaining takes place on the basis of individual rather than common interests (*ibid.*).

Furthermore, the mere existence of the EU institutions as the status quo has an effect of self-asserting change. Taking the example of the Council again, which represents the member state interests and which constitutes the main intergovernmental part of the EU institutional architecture, its centrality in the decision making procedure and its veto power are legitimate sources of the scepticism about the autonomous leverage of the EU (Tsebelis and Garrett, 2001). Nonetheless, the agenda setting power of the Commission and the Parliament, which represent the Community as a whole and the European people respectively, is shown to be more influential than commonly assumed; the rejection of the proposals initiated by the Commission and the Parliament requires unanimity while the adoption thereof requires qualified majority, which makes the use of veto power more unlikely (Garrett and Tsebelis, 1996; Tsebelis, 1994). It should be remarked that these decision procedures are codified in treaty making processes which are supposed to be the main determinant of the pace of integration. Nonetheless, this is not simply a matter of large scale changes that happen infrequently; instead, the institutional design codified in treaties shape the possible gradual transformation towards more integration, insofar as agenda setting power is used with a real chance of impact in this direction (Tsebelis and Garrett, 2001). Therefore, the EU institutions assert their autonomous leverage thanks to the advantages of using the virtually lesser powers vested in them by national actors who tried to keep these under their supervision by reserving the veto power for the Council (Tsebelis and Kreppel, 1998).

These observations confirm, overall, that international and European institutions conform largely to the rationalist theoretical models of institutional evolu-

tion. Implications for multilevel politics are twofold: first, the institutions of multilevel politics, as part of the same institutional architectures, can also be expected to display similar qualities of a difficult-to-reverse entrenchment, a considerable degree of adaptability and refinement, and a natural tendency of self-assertion by making the best use of available powers; and second, the institutions of multilevel politics in Europe function against the background of deeply institutionalized supranational integration, hence a context in which the primacy of the traditional conception of national sovereignty is losing its salience to make way for alternative forms of political organization. In return, the layering of multilevel politics can be expected to make the European institutional architecture even more entrenched.

### **2.3.3 Evolution of the institutions of multilevel politics**

One of the two selected cases, the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities is not part of the EU. Yet it constitutes a significant case of institutional entrenchment and self assertion as well, since it has moved from an ad hoc and peripheral position to a permanent and central place within the institutional architecture of the CoE. It was established as the Conference of Local Authorities of Europe as early as 1957 and extended its membership to regional authorities in 1975, it attained a more permanent status in 1979 as the Standing Conference, and became one of the main bodies of the CoE in 1994 with a statutory resolution of the Committee of Ministers. This last step shows that the Congress had to rely on intra-institutional relations of the CoE to acquire its permanent and central status, and that it successfully utilized these relations to achieve this end.

An important milestone in the history of the Congress was the adoption of European Charter of Local Self-Government, which shows an example of the effective use of powers at the disposal of the Congress. Given that the CoE is an intergovernmental organization, the Congress would most likely be able to make a real impact through international law, and it accomplished this through the signature and ratification of the Charter which made it an international legal document. It should be remarked that this is an international treaty concerning domestic political structures and the Charter can be seen as an extension of the focus of the CoE on democracy, human rights and rule of law as international norms. Moreover,



the Congress has emerged as the body responsible for overseeing the implementation of the Charter, further anchoring its status in international law and politics by using a tool that it had created in the first place.

On the other hand, the Committee of the Regions was initially endowed with advisory powers and it utilized them to improve its status within the EU. In fact, the advisory powers of the CoR are not comparable to the agenda setting power of the Commission and the Parliament, and in this sense, it cannot be reasonably expected to rise to a prominent status in the institutional architecture of the EU, such as a third legislative chamber, or to assume a leading role to deepen the integration. Yet, over two decades of its existence, it has neither proven superfluous nor remained impotent, but it increased its formal and informal influence. Informally, simply by virtue of having provided input to the European legislation for so long, the opinions of CoR should have become a virtually quintessential part of the legislative process. Similarly, simply by virtue of its existence as a body of the EU at the time of new treaty making, it has had the opportunity to influence the final text and acquire formal powers through the Treaty of Lisbon, namely the right to appeal to the European Court of Justice for matters concerning subsidiarity.

Although this formal competence is not likely to be used to a considerable extent, assuming the position of the defender of the principle of subsidiarity comes with a greater symbolic value. Moreover, this is also a case of appropriating institutional features which have national origins: the principle of subsidiarity was devised by national governments as a protection for their powers vis-à-vis the European level, but a broader interpretation of 'lowest level possible' that the principle prioritizes has led to its endorsement by CoR to protect subnational competences. In this sense, even if CoR has not transformed its advisory status into one comparable to an agenda setter or veto player, it has succeeded in reframing a core principle of the EU into one of multilevel governance/politics, and making itself the institutional champion of subsidiarity.

To conclude, it can be shown that the institutional evolution of CLRAE and CoR displays the qualities of stability, adaptation and self-asserting entrenchment, which embody the institutionalization of multilevel politics. These follow not only the theoretical model posited by new-institutionalist accounts, but also parallel trajectories to international and European institutions, primarily their parent organizations. Together with the qualities inherited through institutional foundation as

discussed in the previous section, the institutional evolution of CoR and CLRAE should shape their general characteristics which will be manifested in their effects on the actors.

## **2.4 Institutional effects of multilevel politics**

The discussion of the origins and the evolution of institutions helps to explain the characteristics that they acquire and develop throughout their lifespan. Yet institutionalization can be said to be complete whence these institutions perform the functions in accordance with these characteristics. In addition, while the effects of an institution at a given time can be seen as the outcome of institutionalization, the recurring effects also constitute a significant mechanism which makes institutional origin and evolution possible. In other words, the effects of institutions at one point are the cause of institutionalization at another (Pierson, 1993). This preliminary idea is also implicit in the preceding sections; for instance, if the choice of an originating institution among plausible alternatives results from the existing institutional context, or if institutional change and stability are shaped by the compliance generated by institutions on the part of actors, then effects are as much part of institutionalization as its outcome.

In this respect, studying institutional effects in their own right has a great potential to advance a better understanding of institutionalization. Meanwhile, institutionalization through influence over actors is the most understudied aspect of multilevel politics, thus the conclusions reached through general observations will be limited in this regards. Nonetheless, for the same reason, the hypotheses derived from this aspect will constitute a large part of the empirical research in this dissertation. Similar to the previous sections, the following discussion will first briefly review the theoretical underpinnings of institutional influence, then apply these to European institutions, and conclude with some remarks on possible areas in which the institutions of multilevel politics are influential.

### **2.4.1 Rationalist and cultural accounts of institutional effects**

The historical institutionalist account of institutional effects does not rule out either strategic or cultural factors; the interests and preferences of actors as well as their strategies to pursue given interests and preferences can still be shaped by institutions. The main effect of an institution which influences both the preferences themselves and the ways to pursue those, in the historical-institutionalist account, is the (re)distribution of power and resources. In this sense, distributive effects can be taken as the distinctive explanation offered by historical institutionalism, while more detailed explanations for strategic and cultural factors are given by rational choice and sociological institutionalism.

The conception of the strategic effects of institutions results from the rationalistic account of the main function of institutions: generation of equilibria in collective decisions, which are extra-institutionally either difficult or impossible. Provided that an institution functions as devised, it ensures the existence of an equilibrium irrespective of the actual distribution of preferences, while this distribution determines the location of the equilibrium (Shepsle, 1979). In other words, the very existence of a well functioning institution is sufficient for expecting that a collective decision will be reached, while the analysis of specific preferences of actors is necessary to explain the nature of these decisions. In this context, a solid understanding of both institutions and preferences is necessary to explain political reality (Riker, 1980).

However, rational choice institutionalism is not as interested in the explanation of what shapes these preferences. In contrast, for sociological institutionalism, preferences and meanings are also shaped by institutions, and the mechanisms of such effects may include education, indoctrination and experience (March and Olsen, 1984, p. 739). These mechanisms can be conceptualized in two ways. First, according to the older approaches of sociological institutionalism, these can be conceptualized as socialization (Powell and DiMaggio, 1991). Second, according to an approach more preferred by new institutionalism, these mechanisms ensure the fulfilment of social roles that are deemed appropriate and define what is deemed appropriate if necessary (*ibid.*; March and Olsen, 1984). More specifically, individuals process the complex information from the social environment

through a limited number of possible cognitive models, schemas and categories, and act on the basis of a limited set of legitimate choices from which motivations are derived (Powell and DiMaggio, 1991); the major effect of institutions is narrowing down this set of choices.

The question as to whether preferences can or should be taken as endogenous or exogenous demarcates one of the deepest ontological differences between rationalist and cultural accounts. The rationalist perspective assumes that actors rationally choose which preferences to pursue, and the way to pursue them is shaped by institutions. The cultural perspective objects that the choice of preferences cannot be seen as rational, since they are determined by institutions or socio-cultural factors. Despite such deep-rooted incompatibilities, complementarity between two approaches will be sought out here, as stated at the beginning of this chapter (Section 2.1.1). At a basic level, the generation of expectations for efficient decision making can be seen as the major strategic influence of institutions, while cognitive aspects should be taken as preference shaping factors.

### **2.4.2 Effects of European institutions**

When the implications of historical institutionalist claims are considered for a traditional understanding of international relations, the distributive effects of institutions over the power structure of international politics would be unacceptable from a realist perspective. In contrast, according to the regime theory, regimes are intervening variables which interact with both basic causes such as power and interests, and the outcomes, modifying and influencing both (Krasner, 1982*b*). They are not epiphenomenal but autonomous factors, as proven by their persistence despite changes in the power structure (Krasner, 1982*a*). In this context, they can modify the power structure by changing incentives, opportunities or directly interests and preferences, by empowering weaker actors, or by undermining and reinforcing existing capabilities (*ibid.*).

As for the rationalist claim, the conception of institutions as process variables from a realist perspective (Snyder, 1996) would suggest that they only represent the way of conducting international relations, without fundamental influence over the outcomes. Yet if institutions matter, their existence and effectiveness would be a determinant of reaching a higher number of agreements, leading to more co-

operation, as would be argued by the liberal institutionalist theory of international politics. The reflection of the third strand of new institutionalism can be seen in the constructivist objections to realism, since the way international politics works relies on how legitimate this is perceived to be by the actors and how plausible alternatives can be envisaged (Wendt, 1987, 1992). In this sense, any influence of international institutions on power distribution, the scope of cooperation or cognitive templates will have fundamental effects on the world political system.

The idea of complementarity between rationalist and cultural accounts can be repeated for international institutions as well (March and Olsen, 1998). But the added value of the cultural accounts, in the case of international institutions, is more likely when the focus is on micro processes within institutions rather than macro-structural factors (Johnston, 2001). In this respect, constructivist research is well equipped to analyse international socialization within institutions, in the sense of both adopting new roles and rules of appropriateness, and internalizing new norms and values, through social learning or argumentative persuasion (Checkel, 2001, 2005). Yet it should also be recognized that strategic calculation may be an effective trigger that stimulates the process of international socialization (Schimmelfennig, 2005). Taking stock of these arguments, both cultural and strategic influence, as well as the interactions between these two types of influence, can be expected from international institutions.

The points on distributive, strategic and cultural effects can be more confidently asserted for European institutions. First, European integration is a process of creating a new form of polity at the supranational level and transferring competences thereto. In this sense, the main power-distributive influence of European institutions is the dispersion of authority across levels of government, which leads to what fundamentally characterizes multilevel governance with the inclusion of subnational levels. Even outside the EU, the transfer of authority to institutions like the European Court of Human Rights suggests a redistribution of power away from the national level. In this respect, even the role of the CoE can be counted among cases of power redistribution through institutionalization from a broader perspective.

Second, the neofunctionalist perspective can be cited to explain the effectiveness of European institutions: integration in one area spills over to another, and integration in economic sphere eventually leads to political integration. More

specifically, as more policy areas acquire a trans-border character, the need to act at the European level to manage and regulate them increases. Even a more sceptical approach to European integration, namely liberal intergovernmentalism, explains the transfer of competences to the supranational level in terms of effective bargaining among national actors, and the benefit of instituting mechanisms to oversee commitment to agreements. Therefore, it can be safely argued that European institutions perform the function of facilitating collective decisions among member states, hence providing them with the means to pursue their interests more efficiently.

Even though the CoE has a distinct status from the EU, it can loosely be seen as part of European integration; in this sense, similar functionalist and intergovernmentalist logics can be applied to the CoE as well in order to highlight its policy achievements (Macmullen, 2004). At the time of writing, the CoE lists 219 treaties<sup>9</sup>, which can be seen as an illustration of how an international institution increases the possibility of reaching collective decisions. And once the CoE becomes the locus of a large number of agreements, from an intergovernmental perspective, endowing it with the authority to oversee these agreements is in the interest of the participant actors, and from a functionalist perspective, such transfers of authority are likely to result in powerful institutions in their own right which can ensure effective commitments to collective decisions. Again, the endowment of European Court of Human Rights with legal authority above nation states to oversee the effective implementation of the European Convention on Human Rights is an example of power transfer across levels resulting from effectiveness considerations.

One of the most significant examples of the influence of these two European institutions is the parallel process of the post-Cold War transition of the Central and Eastern European countries, and the eastern enlargement of the EU. Accession to the EU was a strong incentive for rapid transformation towards a market economy and a democratic system, and the conditionalities relied not only on the *acquis communautaire*, but also on the norms generated by the CoE in many aspects related to the rule of law, democracy and human rights, and in more specific

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<sup>9</sup>The list of treaties is accessed on 30 May 2016 via the CoE official website; URL: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/conventions/full-list>. The number is inclusive of the constitutive treaties.

areas such as minority protection (Sasse, 2008). In this context, the rationalist explanation would point out the material incentives for taking part in institutionalized forms of European politics, and the availability of organizational templates which facilitates the adaptation to the system which is necessary to receive the targeted benefits.

Finally, for the cultural influence of institutions, the normative leverage of the CoE regarding the rule of law, democracy and human rights, as noted on several occasions above, can be counted among broad institutional effects. More specifically, the reliance of the EU on the CoE for setting certain standards highlights the importance of the norm-generating effects of the latter. When the influence of institutions on individuals is considered, Europe is supposed to be the most likely case of international socialization (Checkel, 2005). Among the reasons as to why Europe is distinctive, one can include strong organizational rules, roles, interests and goals, the favourable composition of actors and physical space, and the high level of institutionalization, autonomy and integrity, which are arguably more prevalent in the EU (Egeberg, 1999, 2004). However, previous studies find little evidence to support the claim that a European elite has acquired a distinctive supra-national identity, even in the Commission (e.g. Egeberg, 1999; Hooghe, 2005), and the low levels of socialization can be attributed to pre-socialization factors in the national sphere (Beyers, 2005). Therefore, even if a European political identity is a reasonable possibility, such cultural effects of European institutions remain limited as a result of the continuing precedence of national political spheres.

In sum, an overview of international and European institutions shows that distributive, strategic and cultural aspects are relevant to the study of institutional influence at this level as well. The distributive effects do not have to be limited to the redistribution of power and material resources among actors, but can also be understood as redistribution across levels of government. Strategic influence manifests itself in the form of material incentives for accessing and conforming to institutions. Finally, cultural influence can occur as socialization into new roles and values in institutional environments, although this remains limited even in the European context. Similar patterns can be expected from the institutions of multilevel politics, thus the following subsection will draw on these observations to discuss possible institutional effects of multilevel politics.

### 2.4.3 Effects of the institutions of multilevel politics

The institutions of multilevel politics can be expected to take part in the above mentioned effects of European institutions, especially considering the fact that the CoR and the CLRAE operate under the EU and the CoE, and display parallel trajectories otherwise. In this respect, first, CoR and CLRAE are the bodies that represent the subnational tier of government in these larger organizations which redistribute competences across levels of government, thus their primary status is embedded in such a redistribution. The example of enlargement given above illustrates redistributive effects in the cases of CoR and CLRAE as well: where domestic territorial reorganization results from the prospect of being part of European institutions, either for creating territorial units eligible for structural funds or for transition to a completely democratic system, both CoR and CLRAE establish relationship with subnational authorities in reforming countries to assist them in the process.

Second, CoR and CLRAE respond to a need to involve subnational authorities at the European level in a context where decisions taken at supranational or international level have direct consequences for local and regional levels. In this sense, they offer convenient channels of relationship between these interlinked spheres of politics, hence render the overall decision making processes more efficient. In the case of the EU, this can be explained by the European legislation being binding for all member states and all European citizens, and the subnational authorities working at the closest level to the citizens and being responsible for a considerable part of this legislation. In the case of the Congress, the oversight of commitments to an international document constitutes the main function of the organization. The observation of the state of local and regional democracy in member states and local and regional elections in view of their conformity to common standards, as well as global and European issues which concern the subnational tier of government, is arguably realized in a more effective way by an international assembly of subnational actors who directly experience the consequences of these issues.

Third, the same ideas can be used to depict these institutions as legitimacy enhancing as much as efficiency enhancing arrangements. Ensuring input from the subnational authorities to authoritative decisions which will influence them and which they will implement is expected to bring the EU closer to the citizens.



Similarly, subnational actors are subjects of local and regional democracy who are directly affected by its quality; insofar as subnational self-government is a European value, their presence in European political spheres increases the legitimacy of international and supranational processes. Therefore, the emergence of new socio-political environments would help the dissemination of new norms and values, in particular through political actors who socialize into them. The appropriation of the principle of subsidiarity from the legal discourse, and the concept of multilevel governance from the academic discourse into political debates illustrates the generation, transformation and diffusion of new norms and values.

Nonetheless, these broad observations only suggest institutional effects at a macro level. In order to ascertain that such institutional effects also materialize as influences on actor behaviour, substantive empirical data are required. For this reason, this study will proceed with an empirical research project that investigates the relationship between institutions and subnational actors, and the design of this research will also be guided by new institutionalist approaches. The concluding section will present the hypotheses derived from this theoretical background, the confirmation of which will complement the argument that multilevel politics is institutionalized in view of institutional origins, evolution and effects.

## **2.5 Testing institutional effects**

This chapter has proposed an eclectic new-institutionalist theoretical framework, according to which institutionalization is understood comprehensively as the sum of the emergence, the evolution and the effects of institutions, as well as the development of institutional features which can be explained through rationalist and cultural accounts. In this framework, the narrative of the institutionalization of multilevel politics can be reconstructed in a simplified form as follows:

1. In the postwar context, national actors create European institutions to meet certain goals.
2. Once European institutions exist, they create consequences for both international and national politics.
3. As the effects of European institutions are felt in the national sphere, national actors have further stakes to take part in them.

4. The more European institutions are used for policy-making, the more entrenched they become.
5. The stronger European institutions are, the more effects they generate.
6. As the effects of European institutions are felt at the subnational level, local and regional actors have motives to take part in them.
7. The more subnational actors try to access European policy-making, the more imminent is the need for institutional revision towards multilevel politics.
8. Once the institutions of multilevel politics are layered into the European system, they create new consequences for actors from all levels of government.
9. As the effects of the institutions of multilevel politics are felt at the subnational level, local and regional actors have further stakes to take part in them.

Several remarks should be made on these observations. First, as mentioned in the previous section, institutional effects serve as the mechanism that explains institutional origins and evolution; the origin of multilevel politics can be attributed to the effects of European institutions, and the effects of the institutions of multilevel politics can be expected to generate self-sustaining feedback. Second, this is an open-ended process of path-dependency characterized by both self-reinforcement and gradual change; European institutions survived by evolving towards a multilevel system, and the latest additions with the layering of multilevel politics can also be expected to display a tendency that combines the dynamics of stability and change at the same time, with no definite prediction of an ultimate end result. The narrative is limited to point 9, primarily because substantive empirical evidence on institutional effects is needed to suggest that this process would continue from this point onwards. Thus, considering these two remarks together, testing institutional effects today will show that multilevel politics has already been institutionalized to a significant degree with further potential, which motivates the empirical part of this thesis.

Third, this narrative is not entirely new. On the one hand, points 1-5 follow the standard theories of European integration, particularly with a logic akin to that of spill-over in neofunctionalism. On the other hand, points 6-7 offer an explanation as to why the institutions of multilevel politics emerged, as produced by

the actor-centred approach to multilevel governance. In this sense, the intended contributions of this thesis lie in points 8-9, by showing that the institutions of multilevel governance, beyond their mere existence, also constitute a consistent and enduring architecture of multilevel politics similar to other major political institutions, as they exert effects on actors and thus generate positive feedback. Fourth, however, the apparent compatibility of the narrative with approaches pertaining to the EU might also mean an incompatibility with the institutions outside the EU. Although new institutionalism proves useful in this respect since it applies equally to institutions within and outside the EU, one should not lose sight of the specificities that stem from different functions and trajectories of the EU and the CoE. This thesis will address this issue by exploring the institutional characteristics which are relevant to multilevel politics through a comparative case study.

Two major empirical objectives of this thesis, thereby, are showing the significance of institutional effects and exploring relevant institutional characteristics. To conclude the theoretical discussion, the following subsections will specify the new-institutionalist guidelines for the research design: first, falsifiable hypotheses about institutional effects will be derived; second, possible dimensions of institutional characteristics will be revisited.

### **2.5.1 Institutional influence, expectations and attitudes towards multilevel politics**

According to the framework summarized above, for the institutions of multilevel politics to have significant effects, they must reproduce themselves, hence a system of multilevel politics. The corollary of this logic in the institution-actor axis, as noted in the point 9 of the new-institutionalist narrative, is subnational actors being more favourably disposed to multilevel politics as a result of its institutionalization. In this sense, the ultimate dependent variable, on which the effects of institutions will be tested, is the degree of favourableness of the attitudes of subnational actors. The independent variables, to specify possible forms of institutional effects, are then derived from the three strands of new institutionalism: distribution of power (historical), material benefits and rational incentives (rational choice), and roles of appropriateness (sociological).

Inasmuch as these variables provide logical explanations as to why actors comply with institutional arrangements, they rely on the assumption that institutions offer something to comply with. In other words, by explaining how and why institutions matter, different new-institutionalist theories assume that institutions matter in the first place. Even though this may be seen as a reasonable assumption, or even a self-evident point, it is in fact a fundamental challenge for the theory to prove that institutions matter. As discussed by Adam Przeworski (2004), if institutional effects can only be argued for in contrast to hypothetically counterfactual situations where institutions do not exist, it is impossible to rule out the possibility that both institutions and their presupposed effects result from the same exogenous factors. In that case, the institutions would not matter, they would rather be epiphenomena.

In this sense, in order to argue that institutionalization is a central aspect of the rise of multilevel politics, and not simply a side effect of broader structural factors, the conjecture that institutions matter should be rendered another variable to be empirically tested, in addition to the proposed reasons for why they matter. In the light of Przeworski's critique, this is not to restate the obvious; instead, positive findings in this aspect would not only validate the theoretical approach for this particular research, but also provide empirical evidence to support the validity of new institutionalism as a grand theory. For these reasons, the first independent variable will be a generic concept of institutional influence, which can vary from one individual to another so that the conclusions would not rely on presumed counterfactuals. To test this understanding of institutional influence, the first and the core hypothesis of the empirical research is thus formulated as the following:

**H1:** Subnational actors who have a stronger relationship with institutions of multilevel politics will also have stronger preferences for a transformation towards multilevel politics.

The same logic also applies to the remaining independent variables, which are based on specific insights derived from the three strands of new institutionalism. Since institutional effects have macro consequences, from which it is difficult to discern individual-level variation, they are better studied in terms of the expectations of actors from institutions regarding their presumed effects. This strategy

will also ensure the theoretical coherence with the dependent variable and methodological compatibility with the first independent variable. More specifically, the dependent variable is defined in attitudinal terms, and defining these independent variables as expectations for the posited effects of institutions will ensure that the analysis is consistently at the attitudinal plane. In this sense, in order to overcome the difficulties pointed out by Przeworski, the attitudinal counterpart of the association between institutional effects and a systematic transformation will be analysed.

Furthermore, the influence of institutions on individual actors is already captured by the first independent variable, and in order for the following variables not to be confounded with this generic institutional influence, they should also be conceptualized as independent from the first independent variable. Although these variables provide explanations for how institutions matter, they will not be regarded as mediating the relationship between institutional influence and views on multilevel politics. Rather, their institutional relevance comes from representing the bases of actor compliance with the institutions of multilevel politics, namely, favouring the preservation or the revision of a certain power distribution, seeking institutional channels for certain goals or material benefits, and acting from a certain socio-cultural background. These factors, as propelled by different strands of new institutionalism, will be adapted to multilevel politics in the hypotheses below.

To begin with the historical institutionalist account, one specific form of power distribution that is distinctively relevant to multilevel politics is the allocation of competences across levels of governance. If political actors are categorized into groups that correspond to different levels of governance, the allocation of competences across these levels is analogous to the distribution of power among corresponding groups of actors. Furthermore, given that a transformation towards multilevel politics means the dispersion of power upwards and downwards from the national level, the expected power-distributive effect of the institutions of multilevel politics should be the strengthening of supranational and subnational levels, leading to two parallel hypotheses:

**H2:** Subnational actors who favour more power to be concentrated at the European level will have stronger preference for a transformation towards multilevel politics.

**H3:** Subnational actors who favour more decentralized domestic structures will have stronger preferences for a transformation towards multilevel politics.

Another type of distributive effects can be thought in financial terms. As previously remarked on several occasions, on the EU side of the institutionalization of multilevel politics, cohesion policy has been playing an important role. Yet the motives to access European funds constitute a response to material incentives offered by institutions, hence this is closer to the rationalistic side of redistributive policies. In this sense, European funds can be examined as a material incentive that rational actors may be willing to follow. Thus, being incentivized by such funds can be a factor explaining favourable attitudes towards multilevel politics:

**H4:** Subnational actors who consider European funds as important for subnational politics will have stronger preferences for a transformation towards multilevel politics.

The main type of strategic effect that is emphasized by the rationalist account is the ability of institutions to ensure collective decisions; institutions provide more efficient ways of conducting political activities, which rational actors will choose over less efficient ways. Thereby, the expectation from institutions to generate effective channels of transnational political activity should be aligned with the motives for a more prevalent multilevel system:

**H5:** Subnational actors who prefer institutionalized transnational activity for reasons of efficiency will have stronger preferences for a transformation towards multilevel politics.

Finally, institutions are also theorized to exert sociological effects. Socialization can be considered as a relevant factor, but as a form of direct relations between individuals and institutions, it may have been partially or fully captured by the first hypothesis. For this reason, more subtle concepts suggested by sociological institutionalism will be used here, namely identification with political roles which can be rendered socially appropriate and legitimate by the institutions. In this respect, political identification can be taken as representing the sociological understanding of institutional effects, since identities serve as the cognitive tem-

plates of socially appropriate and legitimate political roles<sup>10</sup>. Subnational actors subscribing to certain types of political identification should therefore expect institutions of multilevel politics to show affinity with the attributes of these forms of political identification.

The types of identification compatible with multilevel politics are arguably those which challenge the primacy of national identity, notably European and subnational identities. Regarding the latter, a further specification can be made for identifications which emphasize subnational distinctiveness as opposed to local or regional identifications which accept the primacy of the national level. From these, two hypotheses can be derived:

**H6:** Subnational actors who politically identify themselves as European will have stronger preferences for a transformation towards multilevel politics.

**H7:** Subnational actors who politically identify themselves as culturally distinctive from their national political establishment will have stronger preferences for a transformation towards multilevel politics.

Furthermore, the types of political identification which are not confined to the domestic sphere of politics, such as ideological or party-political identification, can also be posited as associated with multilevel politics:

**H8:** Subnational actors who identify themselves as committed to their ideological and party-political positions will have stronger preferences for a transformation towards multilevel politics.

### 2.5.2 The eclectic framework and standard practices in new institutionalism

Taken together, all these hypotheses constitute an eclectic new-institutionalist argument which can be empirically tested without relying on counterfactuals.

<sup>10</sup>Where possible, the term ‘identification’ is preferred over ‘identity’ in this work, as the latter can be interpreted as assuming actors as passive recipients of imposed attributes (Brubaker and Cooper, 2000), whereas the general approach of the present study values the agency of individuals. In some instances like the above sentence, ‘identity’ can also be used to terminologically distinguish processes from cognitive templates, but this is not intended to assume static and passive sociological bases for political action.

Nonetheless, it also marks a departure from the conventional approaches of new institutionalism, which can be seen as the price to be paid for bringing together epistemologically divergent strands of the theory on a common ground that allows empirical testing of basic conjectures. In this sense, while the framework developed here is capable of making theoretical contributions to new institutionalism in its own right as it approaches institutionalization from a novel perspective, it should also be noted that such contributions may not be entirely compatible with the existing practices of each strand of new institutionalism taken separately.

The points of departure can be highlighted in comparison with standard approaches in different strands. First, historical institutionalism is often associated with process tracing, a method which derives its strength from deciphering chains of causality over time. The narrative constructed in this chapter, linking institutional origins, evolution and effects, is already a rather informal and compact version of process tracing. However, the hypotheses formulated here are concerned with a cross-section of historical processes, hence they are not longitudinal in themselves even though they are part of recurring institutional effects. The hypotheses 2 & 3, which are specifically attributed to historical institutionalism, are thus informed by this strand primarily regarding the political focus on power distribution, but not regarding the longitudinal focus.

Second, as it is clear in the theoretical remarks made throughout this chapter, rational choice institutionalism approaches institutions in game-theoretical terms, and understands them as analogous to sets of parameters in particular games which shape the distributions of actor preferences towards certain equilibria. The empirical interest here can be seen as a higher-order game with undefined parameters, within which actor preferences for the institutions of multilevel politics are the primary focus of analysis. For this reason, hypotheses 4 & 5 will not test the consequences of particular institutional parameters; instead, they will test the association between the promise of institutions in terms of material benefits and effectiveness, which rational actors are supposed to want, and a systemic equilibrium on multilevel politics, by taking these as not only variable but also independent of participation in an institution.

Third, for sociological institutionalism, the main effect of institutions is generating legitimacy for the socio-cultural structure, by defining the appropriate and acceptable roles that actors can assume. In this sense, as discussed before, this



strand is particularly strong in explaining structural reproduction and the formation of preferences, but concomitantly weak in explaining change and actor agency, both of which are central features of the research problem tackled here and the theoretical framework that has been developed in response. For this reason, sociological institutionalism could be integrated into the eclectic approach by departing rather radically from its conventional premises. Namely, structural transformation instead of reproduction can be understood in terms of a multitude of institutions, some of which lead such a transformation. The supposition of multiple institutional arrangements also means a multitude of legitimate roles for actors that these institutions generate. Thus, actor agency and its links to systemic change can be framed in terms of identification with certain roles, as done in hypotheses 6-8. The basic logic of sociological institutionalism is retained to a certain extent, since identification still occurs with respect to a limited set of options, and likely reflects underlying socio-cultural factors for each actor. Thereby this framing allows sufficient variation for integrating sociological explanations into the overall framework.

### **2.5.3 Institutional characteristics to complement individual-level attitudinal focus**

In addition to these individual-level attitudinal hypotheses which constitute the crux of the empirical research, an exploration of institutional characteristics is still necessary for a complete institutionalist account. To reiterate several points made above, first, other theories relevant for the institutions of multilevel politics, such as those of European integration, would highlight important differences between selected cases, while new institutionalism is used to emphasize their commonality. Second, the posited hypotheses represent the attitudinal counterpart of institutional effects, while their institutional relevance can be shown by examining the corresponding institutional characteristics. Third, the attitude-focused strategy departs from new institutionalism to a considerable degree, and its links to the theoretical premises can be re-established with an institutional-level analysis. These objectives will be attained by analysing the variation in institutional characteristics across selected cases, along the dimensions derived from new institutionalism and its strands.

To begin with the generic conception of institutional influence, this should be the most basic attribute shared by both cases which can be reasonably classified as institutions. In other words, what brings the Committee and the Congress under the same analytical category, according to new institutionalism, should also mean similar characteristics regarding the basic attributes of this category. Therefore, both the CoR and CLRAE can be expected to display a similar capacity to influence actors, and to the extent that they belong to the narrower category of institutions of multilevel politics, they should display this capacity in similar ways.

As for further dimensions, while these will all be useful for institutional analysis, variations can be expected since the CoR and CLRAE are not exact replications of each other. Here the theories of international relations and European integration will provide background information for the CoE and the EU respectively. For the distribution of competences across levels of government, the difference is apparent. The EU is the outcome of a polity-forming process at the supranational level, and CoR, as part of this process, will have a natural orientation to the redistribution of competences in favour of the European level. The CoE is an intergovernmental organization with stricter prevalence of national politics, and CLRAE, as part of this organization, will have a natural orientation to the redistribution of competence within the domestic sphere.

Similar implications can also be derived for practical characteristics. As a supranational polity, the EU is more concerned with policy making; in terms of rational choice institutionalism, this means effective mechanisms to coalesce a multitude of preferences into equilibria. As an intergovernmental organization, the main role of the CoE is facilitating international agreements and the oversight of existing agreements. Yet remaining within the limits of conventional international law, equilibrium-formation is much more infrequent and difficult, since the preferences of national actors are more resistant to the institutional mechanisms which are supposed to channel these into agreements.

Certain cultural differences can be expected, especially when the historical and functional specificities of these institutions are considered. An important part of academic studies on the EU deal with the questions of democratic deficit and legitimacy, but it is not founded on normative bases. To follow the neofunctionalist logic, even if a supranational polity were the long-term vision at the beginning, the foundation has been economic integration. On the other hand, the CoE is

based on more normative grounds, namely the expression of democracy, human rights and the rule of law as common European values. Therefore, the CoE has a strong potential to provide an institutional architecture with significant socio-cultural characteristics.

In view of these preliminary remarks, the institutional characteristics of CoR and CLRAE constitute a highly relevant aspect of institutionalization which cannot be captured by the attitude-based hypotheses but which display important parallels to them. In this sense, institutional-level analysis will be part of the empirical objectives, by following similar new-institutionalist guidelines and unpacking the dimensions outlined here. Combining this with the hypotheses discussed in previous subsections, a complex research design will be necessary with multiple stages and a mixture of methods, as discussed in the next chapter.



## Chapter 3

# Mixed-method approach to multilevel politics

One of the concluding remarks of the previous chapter, which is crucial for the empirical strategy, is on the differences between the eclectic framework developed here and the standard practices of the specific strands of new institutionalism (Section 2.5.2). For this reason, the purpose of this chapter is to clarify the research design and the methods appropriate for achieving the analytical objectives as required by the theoretical framework. These objectives are embodied by a list of hypotheses focusing on the attitudes of actors (Section 2.5.1) and several characteristics posited for the institutions to possess (Section 2.5.3). In this respect, the research design should be capable of using both individual- and institutional-level empirical evidence to test the theoretical propositions.

Moreover, Przeworski's critique of new institutionalism, and the ensuing necessity to observe variation in institutional effects, are pinpointed as the main challenge for rendering new-institutionalist propositions empirically falsifiable. The study of multilevel politics is a fertile ground for overcoming this challenge in both levels. On one hand, a multilevel political system, especially one that is still in its infancy, is categorically different from central state structures in that the relevance of its institutions for actors is variable. This provides the opportunity to observe variation of institutional influence at the individual level. On the other hand, there are multiple institutions of multilevel politics, such as the Committee of the Regions and the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, which

operate independently from each other but also simultaneously in relation with a similar group of actors. This provides the opportunity to observe the variation in institutional characteristics.

To develop a research design which can seize both of these opportunities, different methods will be needed for each level of analysis. The variation in institutional effects cannot be observed with an exclusive focus on institutions of interest; the analytical focus should also cover a wide array of observations including those where institutional effects are close to non-existent. This methodological requirement increases the number of political actors to be covered, which can be appropriately addressed through a cross-national survey. While a survey means relatively simplified information from a large number of units, the existence of a small number of institutions is to be addressed through in-depth case studies which bring detailed information regarding each.

In this respect, the empirical strategy can be understood as based on a mixed-method approach combining quantitative and qualitative components, although these components are not chosen to test-and-retest the same specific hypotheses with different types of data (Lieberman, 2005). Instead, the underlying logic is that quantitative and qualitative methods are not necessarily mere substitutes or alternatives, but they are capable of generating distinctive contributions to inference (Collier, Seawright and Munck, 2004; cf. King, Keohane and Verba, 1994), hence they can complement and inform each other. In the present research, their complementarity is derived from the relative merits of a large number of data points and a small number of rich data containers (Collier, Brady and Seawright, 2004; Hall, 2003), corresponding to survey and case study respectively.

Therefore, the most suitable empirical strategy for observing variation at individual and institutional levels is a mixed-method approach drawing on the complementarity between quantitative and qualitative methods, specified here as survey and case study. Since the questions pertaining to the two levels of analysis are different, the survey will focus on measuring individual attitudes and institutional influence on actors, while the case studies will focus on the exploration of institutional characteristics. In this respect, the following sections will discuss the survey and the comparative case study separately. Yet they do not perform completely separate functions in the research design; alongside the fact that quantitative and qualitative components complement each other in response to the same

broad research problem, the connections between them will also be reflected in the possible uses of survey data for the case studies, which will allow the interpretation of the correspondence between institutional characteristics and influence.

### **3.1 Methods for individual-level variation: Designing a survey**

Surveys are a useful method for generating data for social scientific research, especially in understudied areas, such as that of multilevel politics, where it is difficult to find or rely on existing observations regarding the attitudes of subnational political actors within and without European institutions. The major difficulty in employing survey methodology is the requirement of large resources in terms of funding, time and manpower, as it is usually realized by a group of researchers who are responsible for interviewing, coding, data entry, data processing, analysis, etc.

It is possible to overcome this difficulty thanks to technological advances, namely the widespread use of the internet, since an online questionnaire can be advertised in a short period of time to a large group of potential respondents who can simultaneously answer the questions and whose responses are automatically coded into a dataset. Despite such evident advantages, web surveys are usually approached with a high degree of scepticism. However, when web surveys are conducted with methodological rigour, the internet is only a tool to replace mail or telephone; in this sense, one can notice that concerns about mail surveys decades ago are similar to those about web surveys today (Sue and Ritter, 2007, p. 3). In this respect, methodologically strong guidelines for web surveys have started to be systematically formulated (e.g. Couper, 2008; Tourangeau, Conrad and Couper, 2013). Thus the crucial determinant of methodological rigour is compatibility with the general principles of survey design, irrespective of the mode of data collection.

The main rationale of a survey is inferences at two levels; first, from the sample of respondents to the population that they represent, and second, from the responses given by participants to the concepts of interest (Groves et al., 2004, p. 40). This means that a survey design follows two parallel processes (pp. 41-

47): the one, determining the population of interest, creating a sampling frame which can be assumed to represent this population, drawing a sample which can be assumed to represent this frame, collecting responses from willing participants, making necessary adjustments to enhance representativeness, and computing statistics on the final dataset; and the second, determining the variables of interest as measurable constructs, formulating questions which would measure these constructs, collecting responses to these questions, editing responses to make them amenable for further analysis, and computing the statistics. Throughout these processes, methodological rigour can be attained by minimizing common errors associated with the survey design (Groves et al., 2004, pp. 49-61): for the first, coverage, sampling, non-response and adjustment errors, and for the second, validity, reliability (measurement) and processing errors<sup>1</sup>.

In this context, this section will present the survey design in two stages pertaining to the aforementioned parallel processes. Particular attention will be paid to the steps to be followed, and the errors to be minimized. Thus, the discussions below will show how the empirical research conducted for this thesis satisfies or approximates the ideal standards of survey methodology, and present the data and variables which are used in the subsequent analyses.

### 3.1.1 Population and sample

**Population** As the first type inference is from a sample to a population, it is appropriate to begin with a clarification of the latter. Although for many survey-based studies the boundaries of the population can be objectively determined from exogenous facts and its definition does not constitute a methodological challenge, in the case of multilevel politics whose boundaries are blurry and still in development, clarifying the population becomes a particularly difficult task. Two objective criteria are seen to guide this task: the analytical interest in subnational actors and in their engagement with multilevel political activities, especially in institutionalized contexts. However, these two criteria pull the definition of the population to two extreme definitions, one too broad and one too narrow for the purposes of the present research. Hence a balance must be sought.

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<sup>1</sup>Further details about these errors will be provided below when the procedures implemented in the present research are discussed.



On the one hand, defining the population as those who are actually engaged in multilevel political activities, or even those who take part in the institutions of multilevel politics, would be too narrow. This possibility is especially problematic with regard to the overarching methodological principle of observing variation of institutional effects, which would be difficult to detect in such a population. It should be remarked, however, that when institutions are compared through case studies, a survey sample of their members will provide valuable information and necessary links between the two components of the mixed-method design. For these reasons, the population will involve, but not be limited to, the actual participants of multilevel politics.

On the other hand, defining the population as all subnational actors in Europe would be too broad. Although erring on the side of over-inclusion is preferable to under-inclusion, such a broad definition would be not only impractical, if not impossible, but also analytically uninteresting. To illustrate, the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR) represents approximately 150,000 municipalities and regions<sup>2</sup>, varying from tiny communities, such as Villarroja in La Rioja, Spain with 9 inhabitants<sup>3</sup>, to large metropolises with millions of inhabitants. Even if it were possible to design the survey to cover these 150,000 units, this would also be counterproductive with regard to the observation of the variation in institutional effects: although a large array could be covered from zero to high levels of influence, the population would be overwhelmed by non-existent or very low influence, making it again difficult to analyse meaningful variation.

This apparent dilemma can be overcome by defining the population in terms of subnational actors who actually take part in multilevel politics together with those who can potentially take part in it. Whereas this qualification through ‘potential’ is still vague to a certain extent, an objective boundary can be set by focusing attention to other important qualities of the population. Namely, it is a desirable feature of the survey population to have maximum coverage in terms of the territory and citizens of European countries. Meanwhile, the extremely high number of subnational units results from their nestedness at several territorial tiers. Thereby, limiting the population to the highest tiers will ensure maximum cover-

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<sup>2</sup>This figure is based on CEMR’s own presentation of its members, retrieved from CEMR’s official website on 11/11/2015: [http://www.ccre.org/en/article/about\\_members](http://www.ccre.org/en/article/about_members)

<sup>3</sup>This figure is retrieved from the official website of the National Institute of Statistics, Spain (Instituto Nacional de Estadística, INE, in Spanish) on 11/11/2015: <http://www.ine.es/>

age without increasing the number of units excessively, addressing the problem of impracticality. Furthermore, these politically and economically stronger units can be assumed to be more likely to be engaged with multilevel politics, providing an objective standard for the issue of potential.

However, the population is not identical to political actors from highest-tier subnational units, and further qualifications are needed for two reasons. First, the number and size of highest-tier units are variable across countries. For example, in a large country such as Germany, full coverage can be attained through sixteen *Länder*, whereas in relatively smaller Romania, there is no intermediary between 41 counties and the central government. In cases similar to the latter, fewer units than the total number of the highest-tier had to be chosen; but territorial coverage is enhanced by paying attention to geographical balance, and citizenry coverage is enhanced by opting for larger units. Second, an exclusive focus on the highest-tier would mean a population of regional units only, although local units also are engaged in multilevel politics and represented in its institutions. For this reason, the population is supplemented with cities and towns. Here as well, choosing a number smaller than available units was necessary, and the same criteria of geographical balance and preference for larger units are applied to maximize coverage.

Appendix A.2.1 presents the figures related to each step leading to the eventual sample. Its first two columns give not only the details regarding the practical procedure of defining the population, but also a numerical illustration of what the above discussions mean. First of all, each country is assigned a rough number depending on how big they are, but irrespectively of their administrative divisions (listed in the column 'Cluster number guides'). Second, after considerations of maximum coverage of territory and citizens, geographical balance, and regional-local balance, a certain number of subnational units are selected for each country (listed in the column 'Targeted number of clusters'). The total number that results from this procedure depicts the population defined here: namely, 558 entities from the highest-tier territorial units and relatively large cities and towns from different geographical parts of the CoE member states<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup>The geographical scope of Europe is defined in terms of CoE membership, as it covers the EU and allows the connection with the case studies of CoR and CLRAE.

Since the definition of the population involved a certain degree of selection from within each country, this procedure can be understood as akin to a stratified and clustered sampling, which is why the columns in Appendix A.2.1 used the term ‘cluster’. Moreover, this similarity to clustered sampling calls for further remarks on why a strategy of randomly selecting the clusters was not followed. As discussed above, the actual or potential engagement with multilevel politics is the guiding principle to define the population, and the size can be taken as an objective standard for selectiveness preferable to the statistical representativeness of randomness at this stage. As the targeted number of clusters for each country is between 1 and 33, random selection cannot be trusted to ensure representativeness. Instead, qualitative judgement to balance different types of units and their geographical distribution is the more reliable option.

Although all these choices are based on a rationale for how best to study multilevel politics, and although objective criteria are used as much as possible, it should still be acknowledged that the proposed definition of the population is more complex than what would be expected from a survey. However, this can be attributed to the novelty of multilevel politics and the methodological sensitivities of the approach adopted in this thesis. In this sense, the complex definition of the population results from an unprecedented attempt to measure actor attitudes on multilevel politics and related factors, and an innovative attempt to observe the variation of institutional effects.

**Sampling frame** As the overwhelming majority of the units included in the population have official websites where the names of political actors (presidents, ministers, assembly members, mayors, councillors, etc.) are listed, the sampling frame can be expected to overlap with the population. The main problem, however, is partial unavailability of contact information, especially e-mail addresses. Therefore, only 317 out of 558 units constitute the sampling frame, as seen in Appendix A.2.1. This coverage error could be ignored insofar as partial unavailability of contact information was random, but it can be assumed to be leading to bias since it systematically varies across countries (Biemer and Lyberg, 2003, pp. 46-48; Groves et al., 2004, p. 94).

In practical terms, the construction of the sampling frame began with identifying the official websites of the selected units, finding the list of elected politicians

and their contact information, and integrating them into the database which would be used for call for participation. Where the needed information was missing, the unit was substituted by another from the same country, respecting the criteria of size and geographical location. Despite the substitutions, the number of units from which contact information could be retrieved lagged behind the number of originally selected units. Moreover, it was observed that the smaller the subnational unit is, the less likely is it to publicize the contact information of elected politicians. This observation meant that, even if unit size were not a defining criterion of the population and the selection were more random, the practical limits on the construction of the sampling frame would lead to a similar frame, resulting in a certain degree of under-coverage.

Potential remedies for under-coverage include half-open intervals, multiplicity sampling and multiple frame designs (Groves et al., 2004, pp. 84-89). Combining half-open intervals and multiplicity sampling, local branches of political parties are used as a communication channel in under-covered cases, and using a multiple frame design, transnational organizations are used as supplementary sources of contact information. While the number of contacts achieved through indirect channels such as political parties cannot be known, transnational organizations have increased this number by approximately 10%, adding the contact information of 1,547 subnational actors to the 16,732 collected from subnational units only. Furthermore, 13 countries would be excluded due to the lack of contact information if the frame relied solely on subnational clusters, but transnational organizations as an additional source provided the chance to re-include them. However, these figures do not take into account the duplicates between local and regional units, and between subnational units and transnational organizations, nor the invalid e-mail addresses. The total number of delivered invitations amounts to 16,940, which gives a more appropriate depiction of the size of the sampling frame.

An additional layer of coverage error can be expected if it is not reasonable to assume that all members of the population, or at least the sampling frame, actively use the internet (Couper, 2000, 2005). On the one hand, this assumption can be safely made today since the use of the internet is much more widespread as compared to earlier assessments of web surveys. Political actors can especially be supposed to have active internet access. On the other hand, given that the collected

contact information consists exclusively of e-mail addresses, this type of under-coverage should coincide with the unavailability of information, which would not mean an additional aggravation of the coverage error.

**Sample size** Although a sampling frame is traditionally used to draw a sample, there is no need to target a smaller size in the case of a web survey, since the marginal costs of inviting additional potential participants and receiving their responses are negligible. Therefore, the procedure used in this research is ‘saturation sampling’, in the sense that the group of invitation recipients is identical to the sampling frame (Sue and Ritter, 2007, p. 27). In this respect, the main determinant of the sample size will be the response rate. In the end, the obtained sample has consisted of 802 respondents with a response rate of 4.73%<sup>5</sup>. These figures are achieved as a result of implementing several response-enhancing measures which are discussed below. In addition, by applying these measures, the ultimate aim is to minimize the non-randomness of non-response, hence to improve the representativeness of the sample.

Early assessments of web surveys found that low response rates were a central concern for their accuracy (e.g. Couper, 2000, pp. 485-486; Couper, 2005, pp. 496-497; De Vaus, 2002, p. 132). The underlying cause of this concern can be associated with the absence of a direct relationship between an interviewer and the respondent. Even though the relevance of such a problem is decreasing with the internet becoming a more central and natural form of communication, social exchange theory can still be used to take into account psychological aspects that will increase the response rate (Dillman, Smyth and Christian, 2014, pp. 23-24; Sue and Ritter, 2007, pp. 95-98). Accordingly, participation in a survey can be made more appealing through material or non-material incentives, low costs, cognitive resonance, and emphasizing the ideas of being helpful, making a contribution suitable to the recipient’s social status, positive features of the survey, etc. In this sense, the invitation for this survey, as well as the information page of the questionnaire, has made it clear that participation will not take a long time, that the impartiality of the survey is certainly granted, that the recipient could see

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<sup>5</sup>This sample size does not include the responses with too many missing values. Although this is also linked to item non-response, which is discussed in the next subsection, such cases are treated as unit non-response leading to a lower response rate.

that he/she is personally addressed and specifically selected by virtue of being a subnational actor, that the survey is not something unimportant, and that this research would make important contributions to subnational politics (these features are illustrated in Appendices A.3.1 and A.3.2).

Another reason for low response rates in web surveys might be increasing threats to online security and privacy. People are understandably trying to avoid clicking unfamiliar links and they are reluctant to provide personal information. This sort of reluctance can be even higher among political actors. The most effective way to address this problem should be establishing trust (Dillman, Smyth and Christian, 2014, pp. 37–41). Accordingly, the purpose and the scope of the research, the identity and the institutional affiliation of the researcher, and the guarantees regarding confidentiality must be made explicit and easily accessible. Although these are already prescribed by academic ethics which apply to the present research, their clear expression during the research process has also a practical advantage. The first page of the questionnaire, as printed in Appendix A.3.2, can be expected to establish this kind of trust.

Finally, the multilingual profile of the sampling frame may lead to low response rates for potential respondents whose native language is not available. In order to minimize this risk, the questionnaire is offered in six languages, selected according to the six most widely spoken first and second languages in Europe: English, French, German, Russian, Spanish and Italian<sup>6</sup>. Invitations are also sent in the native language of the respondent if available, or otherwise in the most likely second language alongside English. Different languages are integrated into the same web design, as seen in Appendix A.3.3, whereby language choice is provided at the very beginning.

**Representativeness** The mismatch between the population and the sampling frame, and between the sampling frame and the sample will lead to biased inferences unless under-coverage and non-response are unsystematic and random. As seen in Appendix A.2.1, the last column of the table displays a high degree of variation in the response rate among countries. Nonetheless, neither the level of

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<sup>6</sup>In selecting languages, the report ‘Europeans and their Languages’ (European Commission, 2012) is taken as reference. Even though this report is only concerned with the EU, the continuing relevance of Russian in Eastern Europe can be seen as indicative of its prevalence in other non-EU countries as well.

the unavailability of contact information, nor the overall language competence in a country is found statistically related to varying response rates, as presented in Appendix A.2.2. In this sense, responses from each country can be taken as representative of their respective sub-populations, even if their relative size in the sample need adjustment to balance high and low responses from different countries. In other words, assuming that a non-response does not result from any systematic bias of sampling, apart from possible links to unobserved country characteristics, adjustments made on the basis of country distribution will render the sample representative of the population. Weighting will be used in this respect, by taking into account the mismatch between sample characteristics and population parameters to provide more accurate findings at the stage of statistical analysis (Kalton and Flores-Cervantes, 2003).

Before recalibrating the sample, however, the outer limits of representativeness should be established by looking at several characteristics of the included cases. First, there are 10 countries from which no response was received, among which Turkey and Hungary are the biggest, while Andorra, Liechtenstein, Monaco and San Marino are very small, and Armenia, Macedonia, Moldova and Montenegro are relatively small countries<sup>7</sup>. Second, some countries are represented with very small numbers, usually displaying an inconsistency with their size. Considering the absolute numbers of respondents in the sample, and the degree of under-representation, as summarized in Appendix A.2.3, it is difficult to claim the representativeness of another 12 countries: Albania, Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Georgia, Latvia, Poland, Romania, Russia, Serbia and Ukraine. Therefore, the sample represents 25 countries out of 47, corresponding to 54% of the total population of 'larger Europe'. It is also difficult to claim that this sample represents the initially designated population; those countries whose representation in the sample is either weak or non-existent tend to be from the Balkans, Eastern Europe and Caucuses. Therefore, any inferences from this sample will be limited to a more western-focused understanding of Europe as a geographic region.

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<sup>7</sup>The combined population of these relatively small and very small countries is approximately 9 million, almost the same as the population of Hungary alone. While this means a small decline in the population coverage of the sample, it also means a weaker representativeness of small countries.

Within these limits, weighting procedures will only take into account the 25 appropriately represented countries. Calculating weight on the basis of 37 countries would result in extreme figures, such as 47.28 for Ukraine and 39.73 for Russia, as shown in Appendix A.2.3. By calculating the weights with 25 countries only, the largest figures are reduced to more acceptable levels of 3.78 for Greece and 3.25 for Spain. In further analyses, 22 responses from the remaining 12 countries are still kept in the sample, and grouped into two categories of ‘Other EU’ and ‘Other non-EU’, whereby their weights are assigned the neutral value of 1.00. On the other hand, there are also cases of over-representation, but this does not pose a serious problem since small weights, which can get as low as 0.10 in the case of Switzerland, are less likely to lead to biased estimates.

In addition to the country distribution, the institutional background and the demographics of respondents can also be evaluated to describe the population that the sample represents. First, for domestic institutional background, 47.5% of respondents define their subnational entity as local, 33.5% as regional with legislative powers, and 18.1% as regional with administrative powers. Thus, the stratification of the sampling frame into the highest-tier entities and local entities has been successful in generating a sample that is balanced between regional and local dimensions of subnational politics. Second, for transnational institutional background, 24.9% of respondents report past or present membership in an organization operating above the national level. Thus, the sample can be taken to represent a population of subnational political actors, one quarter of whom have had direct experience in a transnational organization. Given that the population is defined in terms of the potential to engage in multilevel political activities, this provides a more precise meaning to this definition: 25% is high enough to claim that the sample contains relevant information regarding multilevel politics, and low enough to reflect the fact that multilevel political engagement is still an exception for the majority. In other words, the ultimate methodological aim of observing variation of institutional effects has been achieved, and this has not been at the expense of reducing the number of respondents with direct contact with institutions to very small levels.

As for the demographics, the distribution of the age of respondents is fairly balanced. More specifically, the age ranges from 21 to 83, showing that the sample is not biased towards either early-career or late-career political actors. 33.3% of



respondents report their gender as female, and 66.6% as male; the sample thereby reflects the male-dominated political sphere in subnational authorities. Finally, participants are asked to position themselves on a political left-right scale from 1 to 9. The results imply a bias towards the left; when responses are divided into three equally divided categories of 'left' (1-3), 'centre' (4-6) and 'right' (7-9), the frequencies result in 44.6%, 37.3% and 18.1% respectively. Comparing this distribution to that of the European Values Study 2008 (EVS, 2016), where 59.3% of the respondents position themselves on the left and 40.7% on the right of a scale with 10 response categories, the sample obtained by this survey, in which 60% reported themselves to be in the first four categories and 40% in the last five, can be considered as providing a realistic representation<sup>8</sup>, insofar as right-wing politicians are assumed to have a stronger propensity to report 'centre' than left-wing politicians. Nevertheless, in the interpretation of findings, this feature of the distribution of ideological self-positioning must be taken into account.

### 3.1.2 Variables

**Conceptualization** Testing the hypotheses that have been identified in the previous chapter requires the analysis of corresponding variables. In turn, these variables have to be conceptualized, operationalized and measured (Babbie, 2013, pp. 163-196). To begin with conceptualization, the main aim is to achieve a high degree of theoretical precision by clarifying the content of what is meant by each variable. Conceptual clarification is especially important in this research, given that the majority of variables will draw on attitudes which are not directly or indirectly observable, but which should be understood as constructs to be deduced with reference to observables (Kaplan, 1998 [1964], pp. 54-56).

The dependent variable used in all hypotheses is 'motives for a transformation towards multilevel politics'. First, taking the elusive term 'motive' as an attitude which can be derived from the views expressed by subnational actors, strong or weak motives can be conceptualized as favourable or unfavourable views on multilevel politics. Second, multilevel politics is a concept developed in this thesis,

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<sup>8</sup>There may be important differences between the self-positioning patterns of political actors and the general public. However, since the parameters of the population of subnational actors are not known, the general-scope surveys such as the European Values Study offer the best available benchmark.

and its precise meaning would not be empirically available for actors to express their views thereupon. For this reason, it should be conceptualized in terms of more tangible dimensions that concern subnational authorities: being among the main actors of European politics, their ability to establish direct relations with foreign counterparts, their representation in transnational organizations, their recognition as subjects in international law, and the absence of national-level constraints on their external relations. Additionally, the terms multilevel governance and subsidiarity have a more widespread use in the political discourse, and the direct expression of the views on these terms will also contribute to the conceptualization of multilevel politics.

The first independent variable is institutional influence, which can be partially conceptualized through indirect observables. Firstly, the membership of a subnational actor in a transnational organization should be seen as a primary element of such influence. For the members, whether their membership is in the past or continuing, and the duration of their membership will be among other indirect observables. For non-members, whether or not the subnational unit of a political actor is represented in a transnational organization provides an indirectly observable dimension for indirect institutional influence. However, assuming that institutional influence may vary even for actors with similar degrees of exposure to institutionalized multilevel politics, attitudinal dimensions will consist of an awareness about such organizations and the motivation to be a member of them for the non-member actors, and the professional satisfaction with and personal importance attached to the membership for those with transnational experience.

Moreover, two independent variables which are concerned with power distribution, namely 'favouring power to be concentrated at the European level' and 'favouring decentralized domestic structures', will be conceptualized along common dimensions. First, actors can be expected to have preferences about how much power supranational and subnational authorities should possess in general. Yet their views may vary with respect to different policy areas. For this reason, the conceptualization of power distribution should be further specified as consisting of several dimensions, which are identified in this research as social policy, economic policy, internal affairs and foreign affairs. Additionally, two relevant concepts, namely federalism and decentralization, may also be good indicators of the views on stronger subnational competences.

With regard to material incentives, two variables are posited. First, European funds are put forward as direct benefits. This variable can be conceptualized in two dimensions: through an indirect observable as to whether the subnational unit of the actor receives European funds, and through a construct regarding the importance that the actor attaches to European funds. Second, preference for institutionalized activity for reasons of efficiency can be deduced from what subnational actors think about the effectiveness of specific forms of institutionalized activity, namely transnational organizations, direct channels and national mediation. Focusing on formal organizations, the extent to which subnational actors find them useful for external relations is a more specific aspect that would be analytically interesting. Finally, the variables pertaining to the cultural aspect of the theory are formulated in the hypotheses in terms of identifying oneself as European or culturally distinctive from the national establishment. The conceptualization of these variables does not have to draw on any additional indicators, since ‘identity’ is best understood in view of how people identify themselves (Brubaker and Cooper, 2000), hence ‘identification’ with relevant political roles will constitute the basis of sociological variables.

**Operationalization** The validity of variables depends on the extent to which eventual measurements indeed measure what is meant by the conceptualization. In this respect, operationalization is a crucial stage which links the theoretical background of variables to the collected data, by translating the specified dimensions into questions, the answers to which will be coded into the values of the variables. The resulting standardized questionnaire is printed in Appendix A.3.2.

The questionnaire begins with questions which are relatively easy to answer and unthreatening. First, a few items on the country and the subnational unit in the Section 1 of the questionnaire are used to assess the representativeness of the sample above. Section 2 begins with the dependent variable and continues with several independent variables. Sections 3 and 4, with their subsections depending on the special circumstances of the respondent, target multiple dimensions of institutional influence. Finally, Section 5 includes questions on several demographic factors and political identification variables. The overall design of the survey has benefited from the general guidelines provided by survey methodologists (e.g. Converse and Presser, 1986; Saris and Gallhofer, 2014) in choosing among alter-

native approaches such as the number of categories, offering a middle category and ‘no opinion’ option, presentation of questions, etc., as discussed below.

With regard to general characteristics, special attention is paid to the simplicity of language and presentation, and to the specificity of questions and answer categories. As a principle of simplicity, the questions were kept as short as possible without compromising precision: in most cases, a request for answer follows one sentence of background information. In addition, the strategy of bringing together the questions and the statements which correspond to the dimensions of a single variable was followed to highlight the thematic linkages and to make responses more convenient. With regard to specific choices, first, 5-point ordinal scales are preferred in order to attach meaningful labels to each answer category. Second, middle categories are used because, in general, there is no need to differentiate answers between positive and negative camps with a few exceptions. Third, ‘no opinion’ option is offered so that the lack of preference is not compounded with the ordinal position of the middle category.

The conceptualization of variables is reflected into the questionnaire with respect to these standards. For the dependent variable, five aforementioned dimensions of the views on multilevel politics are formulated into statements, and the respondents were asked to state their degree of agreement with each. For the views on the power of European institutions and subnational authorities, the political areas of social policy, economic policy, internal affairs and foreign affairs are supplemented with examples to increase the level of specification, and presented alongside an additional overall evaluation, with the answer categories varying between ‘very weak’ and ‘very powerful’. The concepts of multilevel governance, subsidiarity, federalism and decentralization are similarly presented to be evaluated between very negative and very positive opinions.

The majority of the variables pertaining to material and cultural aspects are not conceptualized with multiple dimensions, thus they would not be measured through a composition of questions. In view of making them amenable to quantitative analysis, they should be operationalized with either a high number of answer categories, or an even number of categories that can be reduced to a 2-point scale<sup>9</sup>.

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<sup>9</sup>Treating ordinal variables as continuous is usually accepted as valid with at least 7 answer categories. Meanwhile, dummy-coding ordinal variables with 5-point scales creates redundancy in the statistical model by decreasing the degrees of freedom. A reduction to 2-point scales allows including each variable in the model with only one dummy.

In this respect, the questions on the effectiveness of institutional channels, and the role of European funds are not asked in 5-point scales to be able to use them in the analysis as binary variables. This type of dichotomous coding in these variables is useful insofar as the main interest is simply in differentiating those who think a certain type of institutional channel is effective, those who have received, are receiving or will receive European funds, and those think that European funds are important. Similarly, answers for political identity are sought in terms of whether the respondent chooses to identify him/herself with each category, rather than in terms of degrees of identification. One exception is the perceived usefulness of transnational organizations, which is designed with a view to generating a multidimensional continuous variable, hence operationalized in the questionnaire through ordinal scale questions on political, economic and cultural benefits.

More complex procedures of operationalization are needed for the measurement of institutional influence. First of all, a differentiation is necessary between non-members, the members of multiple organizations, and the members of specific organizations. For this reason, the first question of the Section 3 of the questionnaire redirects respondents to respective subsections. Similarly, Section 3B redirects members of multiple organizations to the relevant subsection of one type of organization. For the non-members, the representation of the subnational unit of the respondent in a transnational organization is asked as a Yes/No question, and the awareness of such organizations and the motivation to work in them are asked with 5-point scale ordinal answer categories. For the members, a 2-point scale question asks whether membership is in the past or current, and the dimensions of duration, professional satisfaction and personal importance are asked with 5-point scale ordinal answer categories. A similar procedure is also followed for external offices as an additional layer of institutionalized multilevel politics in the Section 4 of the questionnaire.

The degree to which these operationalizations are successful determines the validity of the variables which will be used in the analysis. Although there is no formal way to test their validity, it should be noted that tailoring a new survey to the objectives of the present research is a factor that diminishes the risk of any mismatch between the conceptual background and the actual measurement of variables. Since each question is formulated to fulfil a specific purpose that

is derived from the conceptualization of variables, the responses can be taken as valid representations of the values attached to the variables of interest.

**Measurement** Following the conceptualization and the operationalization of variables, they are measured on the basis of the responses given by subnational actors to the questionnaire. The main concern in this measurement stage is reliability, that is, the consistency in the ability of the questionnaire to collect meaningful data. The main challenge in ensuring reliability is that systematic measurement errors cannot be detected until after the data have been collected. In order to mitigate measurement-related risks, the questionnaire has been tested against the data collected from a pilot study.

For this pre-test, an additional sampling frame was drawn from the UK and the Republic of Ireland with subnational clusters which are not included in the main frame. These countries were selected primarily for the convenience of testing the questionnaire in its original language and the wide availability of contact information. In the end, this sampling frame consisted of approximately 2,400 subnational actors, and the sample contained 120 complete or almost complete responses, giving an initial idea of the expected response rate around 5% which has also been the case in the main survey. The preliminary analyses conducted on the pilot data show that the potential problems associated with systematic measurement errors are not present in this survey, as discussed below.

First, in terms of general advantages of web surveys, interviewer bias can be dismissed as there is no intermediary between the respondent and the questionnaire, with the exception of an electronic device. The possible use of different types of device, such as computers, tablets and smart phones, could be seen as a source of inconsistency, which has been minimized through design features which adapt to the screen where the questionnaire is displayed. The absence of a human factor also means that social desirability bias need not be a serious concern, given the anonymity of answers and the lack of sensitive information requested from the respondents. Similarly, primacy or recency biases, that is, the propensity to choose the first or the last heard option respectively, are dismissed in a web survey where the answer categories are displayed on the same screen which does not prioritize the visibility of any option.

Second, in terms of general disadvantages, several other types of bias may be exacerbated in web surveys. For instance, the questionnaire carries a considerable risk of acquiescence bias, that is, a higher tendency to agree than disagree, due to the formulation of ordinal scale questions in agree-disagree and positive-negative terms (Converse and Presser, 1986, p. 38). Pilot study data has indeed displayed answer distributions with a negative skew. However, when composite variables are generated through additive indices, distributions are normalized through simple data transformation procedures, showing that in spite of a general tendency to agree, the selection of the most positive answer in all dimensions of a variable is an exception. This finding also increases the confidence in the absence of primacy and recency effects. A parallel bias could be expected in the form of giving similar answers to different indicators of the same variable, but this is also ruled out by the pilot data as the variability of the values of the composite variables is as nuanced as the total number of indicators. Finally, greater convenience of dropping out could be a disadvantage of using a web survey as the mode of data collection, but this has also proved marginal in view of the very low item non-response rates in the pilot study. Overall, the preliminary statistical models fitted to the pilot data (presented in Appendix A.1) have shown that the questionnaire was capable of collecting meaningful data from which associations among variables could be inferred.

It should be noted that the main survey also generated data for which measurement related issues did not pose a serious problem. However, one major concern of reliability which could not be tested in the pilot study stems from the multi-lingual population. In other words, the administration of the same questionnaire in different languages raises serious questions regarding cross-linguistic consistency. The main precautions taken against this risk involved the selection of translators with proven competence in social scientific texts, and the proofreading of the translated texts by actual social scientists who are native speakers of the target language, checking the accuracy of translations against the original in English. Furthermore, several post-facto tests did not return statistically significant differences in major variables, when the sample is divided into subsets with respect

to the questionnaire language<sup>10</sup>. On the other hand, another type of systematic measurement error might be caused by the limited availability of languages and varying competence in second languages. This possibility is also ruled out by similar tests<sup>11</sup>.

**Data processing** The last stage for making the raw data amenable to statistical analysis consists of several additional transformations. First of all, data processing should re-aggregate the disaggregated components of composite variables. More specifically, conceptualization has identified multiple dimensions for the views on multilevel politics, the strength of European institutions and subnational authorities, the influence of transnational institutions, and the perceived usefulness of transnational organizations; operationalization formulated questions for multiple indicators; and measurement generated numerical values for them from ordinal answer categories. Thereby, these constructs are turned into variables with continuous scales by adding together the numerical values assigned to the ordinal answer categories. While four relatively simple variables are generated through additive indices, the more complex operationalization of institutional influence requires a more detailed approach. Notably, the categorical distinction between the members and the non-members of transnational organizations should be preserved, leading to a multi-stage indexing with higher values for those with actual experience in transnational institutions<sup>12</sup>.

Furthermore, parametric significance tests assume the normal distribution of continuous variables, which cannot be satisfied by the raw data. As noted above, there is a general tendency to give positive responses to ordinal answer categories, resulting in negatively skewed distributions for the views on multilevel politics, and the strength of European institutions and subnational authorities. These vari-

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<sup>10</sup>For four variables with continuous scale, including the dependent variable on the view on multilevel politics, the mean differences between subsets of questionnaire language return insignificant *t*-values at 5% cut-off, when country effects are controlled for.

<sup>11</sup>For the same continuous variables, among the respondents who answered the questionnaire in English, the mean differences between those from Anglophone countries and others return insignificant *t*-values at 5% cut-off.

<sup>12</sup>The details of the construction of the variable of institutional influence are given in the next chapter under univariate analyses, since the multi-stage indexing depends largely on the actual data.



ables are normalized through squaring and cubing where necessary<sup>13</sup>. On the other hand, the majority of the sample reporting no direct experience in transnational institutions means a positively skewed distribution for institutional influence, which is normalized through natural logarithm. For the simplicity of the interpretation in the stage of analysis, normal distributions are rescaled to ranges that do not exceed 0 and 5 on both ends<sup>14</sup>.

Finally, data processing has also addressed the issue of item non-response. Although the observations with large numbers of missing values, especially those who do not provide answers for an entire section of the questionnaire, are dropped from the sample, the existence of smaller amounts of missing values would lead to a further reduction of the sample size in the analysis. While a larger sample size is preferable for a variety of reasons, a more important concern is that excluding observations with item non-response may result in a biased sample. Assuming that item non-response occurs when a respondent does not want to answer a question, excluding this respondent would be systematically linked to the unanswered question. In order to avoid this form of bias and the loss of genuine data points that such cases provide for other variables, imputation comes forth as a useful method to simulate values for missing points<sup>15</sup> (de Leeuw, 2001; Durrant, 2009). In this research, the general-purpose statistical package *Amelia II* (Honaker, King and Blackwell, 2011) is used to generate multiple imputed datasets.

The main advantage of proceeding with multiply imputed datasets is retaining the sample size and avoiding a possible item non-response bias without changing the estimates that could be otherwise observed. Since the simulations are based on the existing interrelations among variables, imputation only carries these relations upto a larger sample without interfering with them. Even in cases where simulations are not able to impute accurate values, the uncertainty is reflected in

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<sup>13</sup>The decisions regarding which transformation is necessary, if any, also depends on specific distributions that can be observed from the actual data. For this reason, the details of variable transformation are also left to the next chapter which presents survey results.

<sup>14</sup>Since the measurements are merely theoretical constructs that are developed in this study, such data transformations do not affect the accuracy of interpretations. In other words, the values that each variable take do not have a meaning independent of the values assigned in the questionnaire. Thereby, the normalization and reduction to 0-5 scale can be seen as part of the indexing procedure.

<sup>15</sup>Comparison of nested models, which is crucial for model specification, requires the same sample size for all tested statistical models. Without imputation, observations with at least one missing value would have to be dropped from all models.

the variation of imputed values across multiple datasets. The drawback would be increased standard errors, but this would lead to a cautionary choice by opting for a Type II error rather than Type I. Additionally, sustained sample size will provide sufficient compensation. For these reasons, the analyses in this research will be conducted on the basis of results combined from 5 imputed datasets.

### 3.1.3 Quantitative methods of analysis

Statistical analysis is the ultimate aim of the two parallel processes of survey design, generating a sample of respondents who have given answers to the designated questions. In this respect, the research will proceed in three steps. First, univariate analyses will be conducted to examine the above-discussed variables. These analyses will also provide a more concrete content to the relatively abstract methodological discussions and the descriptions of the research process of this section. Second, bivariate analyses will test individual hypotheses that form the basis of the proposed research design. Third, the full set of hypotheses will be treated as a single argument, and tested as a multiple regression model with ordinary least squares (OLS). Having checked the basic assumptions during univariate and bivariate analyses, this model will return statistics for each variable when others are controlled for, hence accounting for the interrelationships among them.

The choice of multiple OLS regression is made against two alternatives. First, considering that the measurement of variables is at ordinal scales including the dependent variable, an ordered logit or probit regression seemed to be the natural choice. However, multilevel politics is a multidimensional concept, and this is reflected in its measurement; reducing it back to a 5-point ordinal scale would remove the information gathered from the nuances among multiple dimensions. Furthermore, since the values attached to the variables do not have a meaning independent of the present research, any simulations that could follow the obtained odds ratios would not be particularly informative. To test the usefulness of OLS and ordered regression, respective models were compared during the stage of pilot study, with no considerable difference between the significance levels of the independent variables.

Second, the cross-national property of the sample calls for a special attention to country clusters, and multilevel modelling with random country effects came

forth as the most plausible alternative. However, for multilevel modelling, rigorous sample size requirements apply to within-country and across-country numbers of units alike (Snijders and Bosker, 1999, p. 140). In this respect, a second-level sample size of 25 countries is the absolute minimum for reliable estimates from simple models, and more complex models require larger samples (Bryan and Jenkins, 2016). In the sample that has resulted from the survey, there are only 11 countries with reasonably high numbers of respondents. As a remedy for the inability to use multilevel models, country fixed effects are going to be inserted into OLS models, and country-specific regressions will be separately examined.

On a practical note, the statistical analyses are conducted by using the programming language R (R Core Team, 2016). More specifically, the multi-purpose statistical package `Zelig` (Imai, King and Lau, 2008; Choirat et al., 2016) is used to fit the models. The main reason for using `Zelig` is its convenience in combining the results from multiply imputed datasets. In addition, the presentation of findings makes extensive use of the graphical packages `ggplot2` (Wickham, 2009) and `likert` (Bryer and Speerschneider, 2015). Other packages used for miscellaneous reasons, such as data processing and regression diagnostics, include `car` (Fox and Weisberg, 2011), `Hmisc` (Harrell, 2016), `plyr` (Wickham, 2011), `reshape2` (Wickham, 2007), `lmtree` (Zeileis and Hothorn, 2002) and `gridExtra` (Auguie, 2016).

## **3.2 Methods for institutional-level variation: Comparative case study**

Having designed the individual-level research through a cross-national survey, there will also be a comparative case study designed to address the institutional-level variation. As discussed in the introduction to this chapter, the relative merit of the second part of the mixed-method design is the opportunity to derive rich information from a small number of units of analysis. However, there are several methodological issues associated with small-number comparative methods, which will be discussed in the first place. The subsequent subsections will address the use of survey data and qualitative techniques in the case studies.

### 3.2.1 Comparative logic and case selection

Two major types of small-N comparison exist, namely most similar and most different systems designs (Przeworski and Teune, 1970). As the main motive of scientific social inquiry is the control of variables that the comparative method tries to achieve (Sartori, 1970), the first type assumes that all factors are the same across cases with the exception of diverging variables of interest, and the second type assumes that all factors are different across cases with the exception of similar variables of interest. If the scientific control of variables is best achieved through experimental methods, statistical methods approximate this idea through mathematical manipulation, and the comparative method through selecting cases on the basis of similarity or dissimilarity which allows the assumptions of control (Lijphart, 1971, 1975). In this sense, inferences made through methods of difference or agreement, that is, most similar and different systems designs, take the shape of a macro-causal analysis (Skocpol and Somers, 1980).

However, small-N comparisons are methodologically and philosophically criticized for their imperfections with regard to the basic premises of scientific inquiry (MacIntyre, 1971). First, the comparative method relies on a set of unrealistic assumptions, such as a deterministic approach relying on a single cause without interaction with others and a confidence that all relevant factors can be measured without error (Liebersohn, 1991, pp. 315-316). Second, case selection on the basis of dependent variables, which is the only way to ensure the control of variables, inevitably leads to biased conclusions (Geddes, 1990). In this sense, comparative method should not be seen as a source of law-like inferences, but instead generalizations should be limited to moderate levels (Bendix, 1963; Sartori, 1970). In other words, the scope of the theory should be consistent with the empirical evidence and the methods employed in exploring this evidence (Collier and Mahoney, 1996; Mahoney, 2007). It is also true that cases perfectly compatible with the requirements of methods of difference or agreement are nowhere to be found; the purpose of comparative method is hence 'to assimilate and to differentiate to a point' (Sartori, 1991, p. 246), and a wise strategy is to select cases from the same class or 'genus' (Sartori, 1970), which does not necessitate a selection on the basis of variables and avoids the accompanying bias.

In this context, the primary reasons which have already been offered to justify the case selection on the basis of an overview of alternative institutional channels (Chapter 1), as well as the theoretical discussions focusing on the selected cases (Chapter 2), can also be grounded in methodological standards of case selection. In a study which offers new explanations and tries to determine their empirical validity, such as this dissertation, the selection of typical cases is the most appropriate option, in contrast to the possibilities of, for instance, outlying or influential cases which could have been used to challenge existing explanations, if they had existed (Seawright and Gerring, 2008). In terms of the primary reasons offered in Chapter 1, the robustness of the Committee of the Regions and the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities to diverse backgrounds can be translated into methodological justification as typicality, since they can be reasonably expected to occupy the central stage and not display unusual characteristics regarding institutional effects. Moreover, their compatibility with the historical component of the theoretical discussions of Chapter 2 can be expected to extend to the contemporary component as well. All in all, this typicality can be equated to Sartori's logic of selection with a view to representing a category of cases, in this context, the institutions of multilevel politics in Europe. Since the attributes that narrowed down the selection are those that pertain to typicality, the findings of the comparison are likely to be relevant for other less typical institutions as well, insofar as the latter can be fundamentally categorized as institutions of multilevel politics.

Therefore, it should be emphasized further that the reason for including a comparative case study in the research design is not simply an interest in within-case relationships between variables, but also the analytical relevance of taking institutional characteristics themselves as variables, hence the variation at the institutional level. In other words, differentiating between intra-systemic and inter-systemic levels of analysis, and showing the importance of the effects of higher-order variables on within-case patterns, or the lack thereof (Przeworski and Teune, 1970), will help to unify the two constituent parts of the research design. In this respect, a two-level theory will be tested, to see if institutional characteristics shape the relationships among variables that are already observed at the individual level (Goertz and Mahoney, 2006). In order to realize these objectives, the comparative case study will begin with case-specific re-examinations of the survey data,

and continue with qualitative research which follows the same dimensions along which the hypotheses were formulated.

### **3.2.2 Use of survey data in comparative case study**

As noted at the beginning of this chapter, the case study is not intended to re-test the findings of the survey, but to complement it with institutional-level observations, thus it should accomplish separate objectives. Yet these objectives are inherently linked across quantitative and qualitative components, especially regarding the potential relationship between institutional characteristics and influence on individual actors. For this reason, in order to establish a parallel design for the case study, its main dimensions of analysis will also be defined in distributional, material and value-based terms, namely, the redistribution of competences across levels of governance, material incentives offered by and effectiveness provided by institutions, and political norms and values generated by them. In this respect, the comparative case study will serve to explain the similarity or dissimilarity of CoR and CLRAE with respect to a dependent variable that can be derived in the first instance by re-examining the scores of their members on the variable of the views on multilevel politics.

First of all, with a simple approach, the mean scores in the views on MLP will be compared across cases. Second, a dummy-coded institutional affiliation will be substituted for the continuous variable of institutional influence to see the difference that these organizations make when other individual-level variables are controlled for. These two types of analysis will highlight the direct effects of institutions on the dependent variable. Third, given that several independent variables are associated with the dependent variable, any direct institutional effect on the independent variables will mean indirect effect on the dependent variable. In this sense, independent variables will also be compared across cases in order to detect such indirect effects. Furthermore, several institution-specific variables are added to the relevant parts of the Section 3 of the questionnaire (see Appendix A.3.2), in order to explore how subnational actors see the organizations of which they are members, with respect to the main missions and the future of these organizations, and which bodies of the organizations are more likely to be influential on mem-

bers. The findings from these questions will be examined as an additional layer of the quantitative part of the case study.

Nonetheless, quantitative analyses cannot be sufficient for the case studies. Given that CoR and CLRAE are both similar and different, quantitative findings of either similarity or difference will leave behind analytically interesting questions. If both CoR and CLRAE display similar results in numerical terms, how can we account for the differences in institutional characteristics? If CoR and CLRAE display different results in numerical terms, how can we account for the overarching similarities between the two? These questions set the limit of inferences that can be achieved through the quantification of data. From this point onwards, in-depth analyses of institutional characteristics, hence qualitative methods are needed.

### **3.2.3 Qualitative research**

Three major qualitative research techniques applicable to the study of political organizations are ethnography or participant observation, textual analysis, and interviews (Silverman, 2006). Although ethnography would be a comprehensive method which would yield relevant information, it is not very suitable for CoR and CLRAE where members are not permanently based. This sort of observation can instead be replaced by ‘naturalistic observations’ (McNabb, 2004, p. 365) during plenary sessions, which was realized for CoR during a 11-week long fieldwork in Brussels. Although this naturalistic observation has helped to develop a more first-hand experience of what is under scrutiny, with probable indirect effects on interpretations drawn from other methods, it does not constitute a central aspect of the analysis. Instead, textual analyses which were conducted prior to this fieldwork, and semi-structured interviews which were conducted during the fieldwork lay the basis of qualitative research. In line with the general theoretical framework, the exploration of institutional characteristics will proceed along four dimensions: the free-standing influence of institutions over actors, the role of institutions with regard to the redistribution of competences across levels of governance, the strength and effectiveness of institutions, and the norms and values prevalent in institutional environments.

**Textual analysis** The documents which are produced by CoR and CLRAE and which are amenable to analysis can be categorized into two groups: publications and adopted texts. The first group consists of the official website as the primary source of general information, as well as booklets, pamphlets, mission statements, activity reports, rules and procedures, etc. It is crucial to note that the organizations are the authors of these documents as collective actors, and the main aim of the analysis is to infer institutional characteristics from them. In this respect, the publications will be scrutinized with a view to providing answers to questions regarding the institutional characteristics of interest: how do they define their relationship to subnational actors, how do they define their role in terms of supranational integration and domestic decentralization, how effective are their internal structures, how likely are they to make political impact, and how capable are they to change the norms and values that underlie the political discourse in Europe?

While publications reflect the position of CoR and CLRAE as unitary actors, adopted texts result from debate and compromise, and hence reflect the political complexity within each organization. Although the technical nature of these texts make it difficult to derive interpretations on institution-actor relations and normative aspects, they contain rich information on political positions taken by the members regarding the appropriate levels of governance. Similarly, the institutional mechanisms through which the texts are drafted and adopted, as well as the total output, will be used to evaluate the effectiveness of these mechanisms. Given the total amount of text produced by each organization each year, a systematic approach is necessary to arrive at specific findings. For this purpose, this part of research will draw on content analysis to identify ‘specified characteristics of messages’ (Holsti, 1969, p. 14), by relying on the rules and procedures of scientific method (Neuendorf, 2002, p. 10), and complementing qualitative research with quantification where necessary (Weber, 1990, p. 10). The content analysis will be conducted on a sample of texts, selected to reflect the period between 2008 and 2013. While all documents produced by CLRAE in this period are taken into account, two plenary sessions per year are selected from CoR to ensure equivalence across cases<sup>16</sup>.

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<sup>16</sup>The majority of CLRAE documents are approved in the plenary sessions twice a year, while the same practice happens six times a year in the case of CoR.



In this respect, relevant themes will be coded into common categories, and the large amount of information will thus be summarized into the frequencies of these categories. More specifically, the itemized structure of adopted texts makes items the natural units of analysis. These items will then be ascribed values on the basis of the level(s) of government that they refer to. Thereby, the frequency of all levels or subnational and European levels will be taken as indicative of an emphasis on multilevel politics, the frequency of European level or European and national levels will be taken as indicative of an emphasis on European integration, and the frequency of subnational level or subnational and national levels will be taken as indicative of an emphasis on decentralization. On one hand, the magnitude of these emphases will show the role that organizations assume with regard to the distribution of competences across levels of governance. On the other hand, the association between emphases and institutional mechanisms will show how internal structures affect the output.

**Interviews** The survey and its standardized questionnaire served the purpose of collecting data on individual attitudes. Since qualitative interviews are primarily concerned with the case study, the participants at this stage will be seen as informants rather than the subjects of research. In this sense, staff members as well as political members will be among the interviewees. Given that both groups are in a position authority, in the form of either specialized knowledge or decision making power, they qualify as elite participants. Following general guidelines on elite interviewing, semi-structured interviews emerged as the most suitable method (Burnham et al., 2008, pp. 242-243; Aberbach and Rockman, 2002). Even though semi-structured interviews are often associated with non-positivist epistemology (Brenner, Brown and Canter, 1985; Rubin and Rubin, 1995; Warren, 2002), which would mean that the interview itself cannot be a source of information, any research interview has the implicit or explicit aim of making observations, and relatively unstructured interviews can be as systematic as structured interviews insofar as adequate standards are adopted (Gillham, 2000; Morris, 2009). Yet the asymmetry of the interviews that stems from the presence of elite participants must be controlled by cross-checking the accuracy of the information with other sources of data (Harvey, 2010; Berry, 2002).

These broad considerations have led to the design of qualitative interviews in several steps. First, in order to provide assurance to participants, a detailed information sheet and a consent form is offered (see Appendix C.1 for details). Second, in order to ensure that the interview data are systematically collected with consistency across conversations, common guidelines are set and followed (see Appendix C.2 for details). For the political members, the questions focus on the general characteristics of the CoR and CLRAE, their possible strengthening, the role of national delegations and political groups, and their relationship to multilevel politics<sup>17</sup>. Since staff members work for either national delegations or political groups, the questions directed to them focus on the functioning of these bodies. The probes that are identified for each primary question are intended to cover the main institutional characteristics of interest. Finally, participants are selected with a view to ensuring the diversity of national and political backgrounds. In the end, 13 positive responses to interview requests were received, and the majority of interviews were conducted in Brussels or nearby locations (see Appendix C.3 for details). Overall, a reasonable balance has been achieved between three major political groups, different parts of Europe, and staff members and political members. CoR members have a greater weight due to the fact that the fieldwork took place in Brussels, but CLRAE is still sufficiently represented with 6 out of 13 interviews.

### 3.3 Research process

To summarize, the mixed-method approach that has been adopted in this work addresses individual-level variation through a cross-national survey, and institutional-level variation through a comparative case study of CoR and CLRAE. Conducting quantitative analyses on a sample that represents the population of European sub-national actors with reasonable chance to engage in multilevel political activities, within the limits discussed above, the survey data will allow the testing of the institutionalist hypotheses on the link of the views on multilevel politics to the distribution of competences across levels of governance, the material incentives and the effectiveness of institutionalized practices, and the cultural factors of po-

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<sup>17</sup>During the interviews, the term multilevel governance is used as a proxy for multilevel politics, since the latter is not a widely used concept in political language.

litical identification. The findings from the survey research will inform and be complemented by the comparative case study which will explore the institutional characteristics of CoR and CLRAE along the same institutionalist analytical dimensions, through textual analysis of official documents and semi-structured elite interviews.

This design has been implemented throughout four years of research. The first and preparatory stage was concerned with the review of relevant literature and the formulation of the research question, which has resulted in Chapter 1 of the present thesis, as well as the identification of possible theoretical and methodological approaches, and the exploratory analyses of official documents. The second stage consists of the development of the theoretical framework and the formulation of empirical hypotheses, which has resulted in Chapter 2, as well as the drafting of the questionnaire according to the hypotheses and the testing of its reliability through a pilot study. The most important research objectives that have been set out in this chapter materialized in the third stage. On one hand, the contact information was collected for the sampling frame, subnational actors were invited to take part in the survey, and the responses of the participants were transformed into the raw dataset. On the other hand, the semi-structured interviews were conducted during the fieldwork, and the examination of official documents was completed. In the fourth and final stage, the dataset was rendered suitable for further operations, univariate, bivariate and multivariate analyses were conducted, and the information that had been drawn from official documents and interviews was examined with respect to the theoretical framework.

The following sections present the results of the final stage of the research. Chapter 4 provides further details about the variables that have been described here by taking into account the actual responses given by the participants of the survey. The sections on the univariate and bivariate analyses not only discuss the general patterns observed thanks to the survey, but also check the basic assumptions for a multivariate analysis that is the ultimate aim of the survey research. Chapter 5 then specifies the best multivariate model in conformity with methodological and theoretical requirements, running parametric significance tests through OLS regression as discussed above. The results of hypothesis tests, which check the significance of the variables conceptualized in this chapter, are interpreted on the basis of the multivariate OLS model, and con-

clusions are drawn for the broader institutionalist argument. Finally, Chapter 6 begins with a re-examination of the survey data concentrating on the cases under scrutiny, in order to determine the degree of variation in the dependent variable and individual-level independent variables. The institutional characteristics that are explored in the rest of the chapter to account for similarities and differences draw on document- and interview-based data for empirical support.

## **Chapter 4**

# **Subnational attitudes towards multilevel politics**

In the previous chapter, the section on survey design discussed, on the one hand, the general characteristics of the sample, and on the other hand, the conceptualization, the operationalization and the measurement procedures of the variables. Additionally, it has been stated that the ultimate purpose of the survey is to calculate statistics about the variables of interest, and a further processing of the data is necessary for this reason. However, this section has only laid out the methodological principles behind these procedures in a rather abstract manner, and a more concrete understanding of how the intended measurement has materialized in the sample is necessary to substantiate the eventual analyses. The aim of this chapter is, therefore, to answer several background questions regarding the collected data: how are the responses of subnational actors processed into more practicable variables, what are the basic statistics of these variables, and how do the variables relate to each other? In order to understand the attitudes of subnational actors towards multilevel politics and the factors posited as related to multilevel politics, the first section will discuss the construction of each variable and the resulting statistics. In order to explain the observed attitudes, the second section will explore the covariation among variables, and in particular the variation of the views on multilevel politics (MLP) as a function of other variables.

## 4.1 Understanding subnational attitudes:

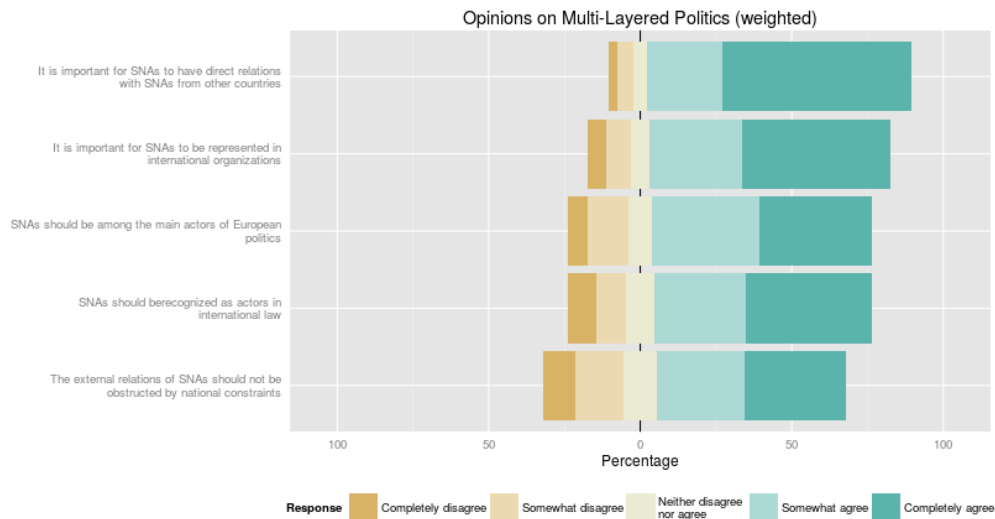
### Univariate analyses

The variables drawn from the survey data are classified into two groups. First, continuous-scale variables are generated by indexing ordinal-scale measurements of multiple dimensions as discussed in the section on their conceptualization and operationalization. Second, dichotomous variables result from either questions asked through Yes-No options, or a reduction of ordinal and categorical answer options. The following subsection will present the components of four continuous-scale variables with equivalent dimensions and the processes of their construction from these components. The second subsection will discuss exclusively the variable of institutional influence, since its measurement follows a more complex pattern. The last subsection will summarize the frequencies of the answers given to dichotomous variables.

#### 4.1.1 Continuous variables

**Views on multilevel politics** The dependent variable of the present study, the views on multilevel politics, is conceptualized as consisting of multiple dimensions which are measured in terms of the degree of agreement with five statements, as well as a possible addition of opinions on two concepts. To begin with the statements, the average scores of five dimensions with 5-point scales result in a combined range of 25 levels. Figure 4.1 summarizes the distribution of responses to each statement, ordered from greater to lesser agreement.

While major analyses will be conducted on the combined variable, a further look at the individual aspects might reveal important information about what it truly represents. The overall results suggest that respondents tend to agree with the statements rather than disagree, which is also seen in the negatively skewed distribution in the top-left chart of Figure 4.3. The order between statements in Figure 4.1 implies that lower tendencies of agreement can be associated with more radical aspects of multilevel politics. In this sense, the bottom statement calls for reducing national competences vis-à-vis subnational authorities with regard to the latter's transnational endeavours, while the second statement from the bottom calls for a status for subnational authorities in international law which is conventionally

**Figure 4.1:** Components of the variable ‘views on multilevel politics’

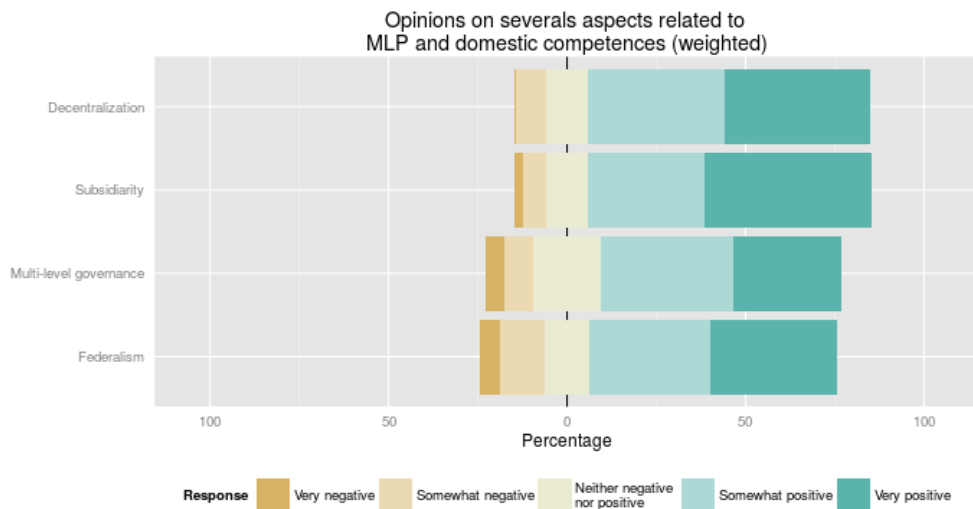
dominated by the nation states. With an almost equal distribution to this one, the middle statement also calls for an equalization of the statuses of subnational and national levels, this time in the framework of European politics, with an emphasis on subnational authorities becoming main actors. In the same vein, more agreed statements have less radical implications, using the phrase ‘it is important for...’ rather than ‘should’ with regard to the transnational relations between subnational authorities and their representation in international organizations. Therefore, the small differences in the higher values of the variable will mostly result from more radical statements, meaning that the highest values indeed represent extremely favourable views on MLP.

In addition to these five statements, participants were asked directly about their opinions on two central concepts of multilevel politics whose appeal has expanded beyond academic and legal terminology, and which have become familiar to political actors: multilevel governance and subsidiarity. The distribution of these responses, summarized in the second and third rows<sup>1</sup> of Figure 4.2, also shows a tendency towards more positive attitudes. Moreover, subsidiarity received more positive responses than multilevel governance; this might allude to the fact that the propensity to favour ideas which only refer to the power of subnational authorities

<sup>1</sup>The concepts in the first and fourth rows are discussed later as part of the variable ‘subnational competences’.

is higher than ideas which refer to a larger scale restructuring of the political system. Considering these parallel features and the common theoretical background, the variable of multilevel politics can also be calculated as the average score of numbers assigned to response options of five statements and two concepts, allowing for a combined scale of 35 levels.

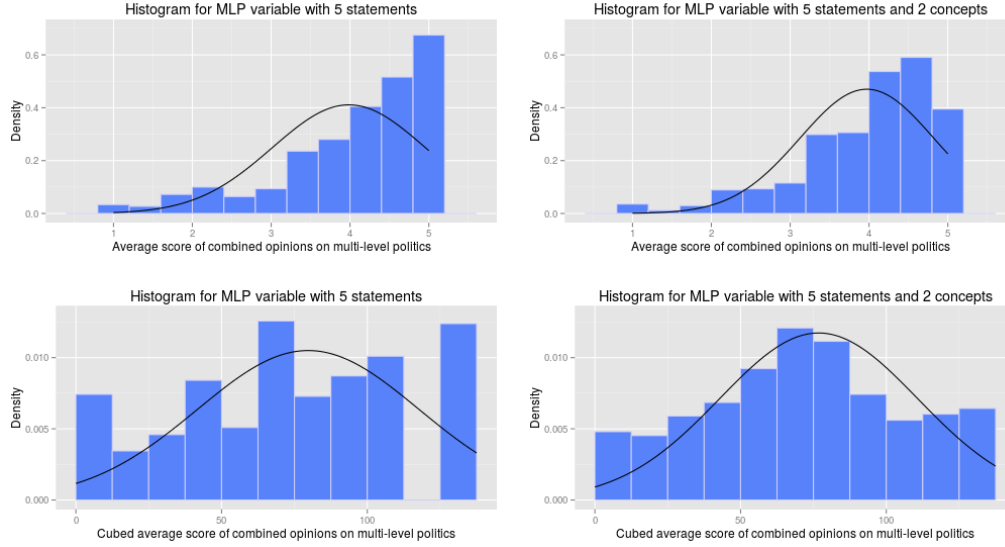
**Figure 4.2:** Multilevel governance, subsidiarity, federalism and decentralization



Finally, having observed that subnational actors display predominantly positive views on multilevel politics, the main focus should be on the variation within the positive side of the distribution. In order to magnify this part of the variation, the eventual numeric values of the variable of multilevel politics will be calculated by taking a power of the initial average values. This transformation will also increase the likelihood of the overall distribution to approximate a normal distribution which is required to meet the assumptions of further statistical analyses. In the case of the views on MLP, squaring and cubing are evaluated successively, and it is found that the latter further enhances the normality of the distribution. In this respect, raw and cubed versions are summarized in Figure 4.3, which are calculated separately for the averages of 5-dimensional and 7-dimensional measurements. The black lines represent an ideal normal distribution with respective means and standard deviations.

Both the addition of opinions of two related concepts and the cubing transformation increase the normality of the distribution, reducing the skewness co-



**Figure 4.3:** Distributions of the variable ‘views on multilevel politics’

efficient from -0.94 to almost zero. Therefore, the distribution visualized in the bottom-right chart will be taken as the final form of the variable. Not only does this provide greater conformity with the requirements of further statistical analyses using parametric significance tests, but analytically it is also more interesting. Given that the prevalent opinion generally corresponds to agreement with moderate statements on MLP, this opinion is represented in the mid-part of the distribution, while the right-hand side represents extremely positive views on MLP and the left-hand side represents negative views broadly. In the end, the views on MLP will be calculated through the following equation:

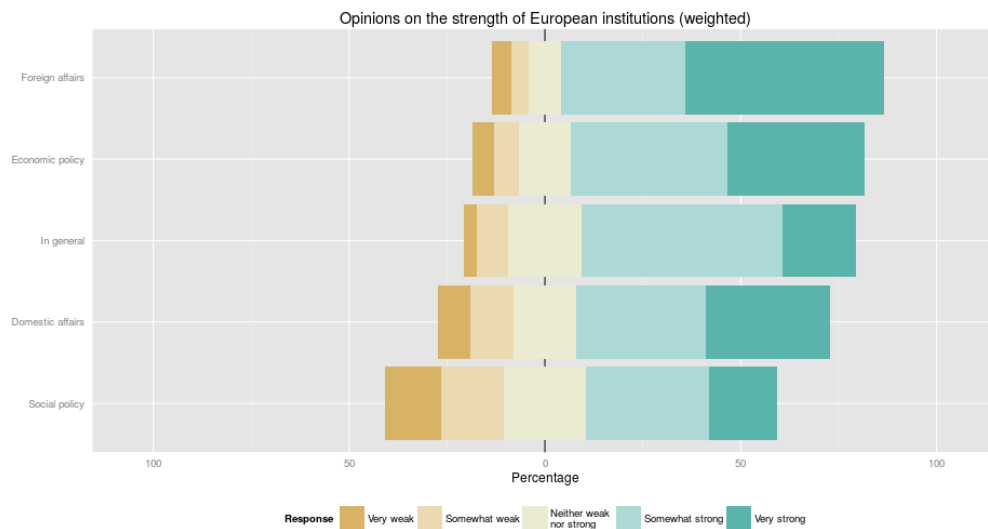
$$MLP = \frac{\left(\frac{S_1+S_2+S_3+S_4+S_5+C_1+C_2}{7}\right)^3}{5^2}$$

where  $S_i$  means the score from agreement with statements,  $C_i$  means the score from opinion on concepts, and the cubed average score is divided by  $5^2$  to bring the scale back to the range of  $[0, 5]$  so that the values are easier to interpret<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>2</sup>Given that different types of transformation result in scales of varying length, the comparability of continuous variables becomes more difficult. In order to avoid this difficulty, once a power  $n$  of the values is taken, this will be divided by 5 to the power  $(n-1)$ , 5-squared in this case. Even though the scales will not exactly match, the maximum value will always be 5, and the minimum value will be between 0 and 1.

**Views on the strength of European institutions** The first continuous independent variable to be constructed is the views on European institutions—the upward aspect of the distribution of competences across levels of governance—measured in terms of the opinions of the respondents on how strong European institutions should be, with regard to four competency areas and an overall assessment. The addition of these five dimensions, as listed in Figure 4.4, will generate a variable which measures the attitudes towards European institutions and which has a scale of 25 levels. The results generally indicate opinions in favour of stronger European institutions, leading to a negatively skewed distribution as seen in the top chart of Figure 4.5.

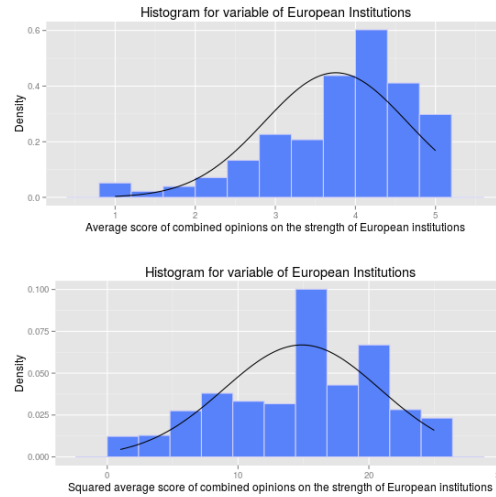
**Figure 4.4:** Components of the variable ‘views on the strength of European institutions’



Among the components of the variable, the ‘in general’ category is in the middle rank in Figure 6, suggesting that it approximately represents an average of the other categories. The categories which received relatively more positive responses are ‘foreign affairs’ and ‘economic policy’. On one hand, foreign affairs represent an area in which European institutions are currently quite weak whereas economic policy is one of their strongest areas. Therefore, the former can definitely be seen as a statement for further strengthening while the latter can be seen at least as a statement of preserving the current competences. On the other hand, both foreign affairs and economic policy, as pertaining to the European level, are beyond the powers of subnational authorities. In this sense, more positive views in these areas

can be linked to the fact that these would not infringe upon their current competences. In contrast, other categories, domestic affairs and social policy are areas where subnational authorities conventionally have more power and responsibility, and would potentially expect to have more.

**Figure 4.5:** Distributions of the variable ‘views on the strength European institutions’



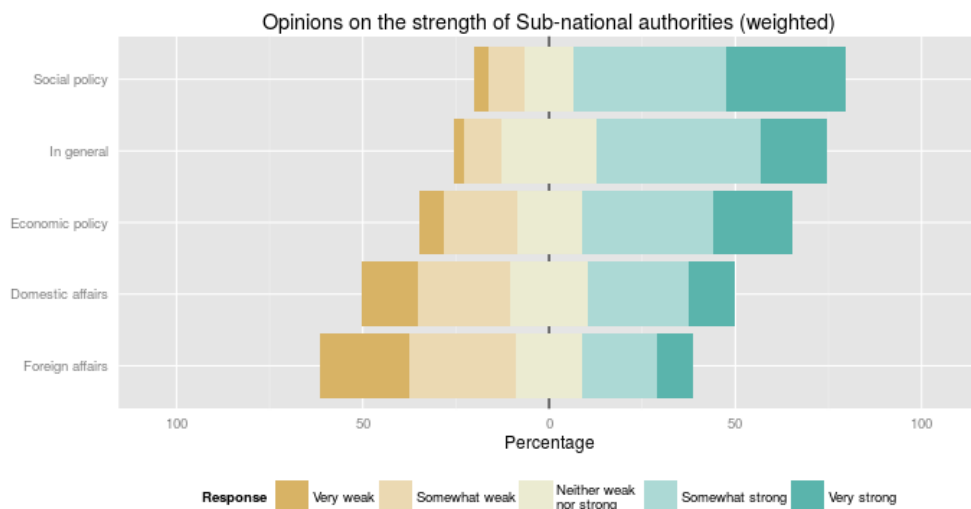
Despite a left-skew similar to the variable of multilevel politics, the views on European institutions display a higher variability on the positive side of the distribution. Thus, squaring the average values is sufficient to arrive at a reasonably normal distribution, while taking higher powers skews the distribution in the opposite direction. Proceeding with the squared form of the variable, which reduces the skewness coefficient from -0.86 to -0.16, the higher end of the distribution will be taken as representing very favourable views on the strength of European institutions, the mid-part representing moderately favourable views, and the lower end representing less favourable views broadly. Taking into account the components as well, the higher values are distinguished from the rest with more favourable attitudes towards upward transfer of competences that are usually associated with national and subnational levels. This formulation of the variable will be given by the following equation:

$$SEI = \frac{\left(\frac{A_1 + A_2 + A_3 + A_4 + A_5}{5}\right)^2}{5}$$

where  $A_i$  means the score from the evaluation of policy area, and the squared average score is divided by 5 to bring the scale back to the range of  $[0, 5]$  so that the values are easier to interpret.

**Views on subnational competences** As the counterpart of European institutions, the views on subnational competences are measured along the same dimensions, as summarized in Figure 4.6. A single combined variable is once again created to form a scale of 25 levels. Nonetheless, as seen in the top chart of Figure 4.7, the distribution of this variable displays a much greater tendency towards the middle category as compared to the previous two variables. The surprising part is that a sample consisting exclusively of subnational actors provides more modest responses on subnational competences than on the strength of supra-national institutions. It can be deduced from this finding that the participant subnational actors make a fair assessment of the relationship between political issues and the levels of governance irrespective of their current position.

**Figure 4.6:** Components of the variable ‘views on subnational competences’



On the other hand, the results on the components are less surprising, although participants tended to mark higher options in the ‘in general’ category than the average of other four categories. Additionally, foreign policy is the area in which subnational actors expect themselves to be the least competent. Considering the overwhelmingly positive views on statements concerning multilevel politics, the

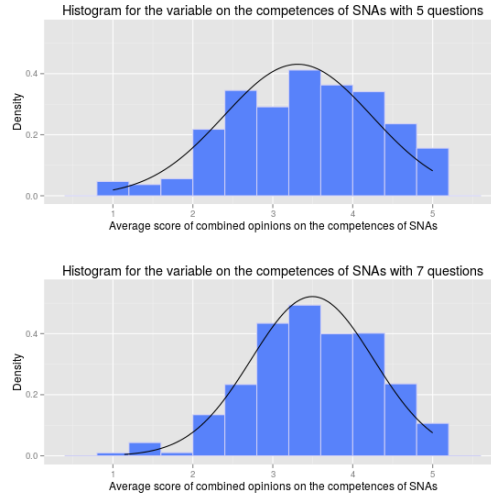
respondents apparently do not consider multilevel activities as part of foreign affairs. On the opposite side, social policy, which was ranked the lowest in the questions regarding European institutions, is ranked on the top as part of subnational competences. These two would suggest an implicit understanding of the division of powers between supranational and subnational levels of government. In this respect, one possible interpretation of domestic affairs being ranked relatively low is the acceptance of this category as an area of national competence. Lastly, economic policy seems to be outside an understanding of the division of powers; instead, multilevel politics can be taken to mean cooperation rather than sharing between levels when economy is concerned.

In addition to these five categories of policy areas, respondents' opinions on two related concepts of decentralization and federalism were also asked, in the same format as subsidiarity and multilevel governance, as shown in Figure 4.2. These could be added to the combined scale in a similar way to the variable on multilevel politics, as suggested in the stage of conceptualization. However, based on the examination of the actual data, this has proved to be unnecessary. Above all, adding two additional dimensions would make the design of this variable more similar to the dependent variable, and more dissimilar to the views on European institutions, while its parallelism with the latter is more logical. Therefore, this operation would be meaningful only if it offers a significant practical advantage. However, given that the variable with 5 dimensions is already normally distributed, and that the addition of two further dimensions does not improve but deteriorates the distribution<sup>3</sup>, as compared in Figure 4.7, there is no need to depart from the 5-dimensional construction of the variable of the views on subnational competences.

Moreover, any further transformation is not necessary either, as the normality of the distribution would not be significantly improved in this way. Thus, the highest values of the variable would be distinct from the rest due to those actors who think that subnational authorities should share in the competences categorized under 'domestic affairs' and 'foreign affairs', and the lowest values would be distinctive due to those who think that subnational authorities should not be

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<sup>3</sup>Adding the opinions on two related concepts increases the mean from 3.31 to 3.50, further away from the middle category of ordinal measurements, and shifts the skewness coefficient from -0.10 to -0.21.

**Figure 4.7:** Distributions of the variable ‘views on subnational competences’

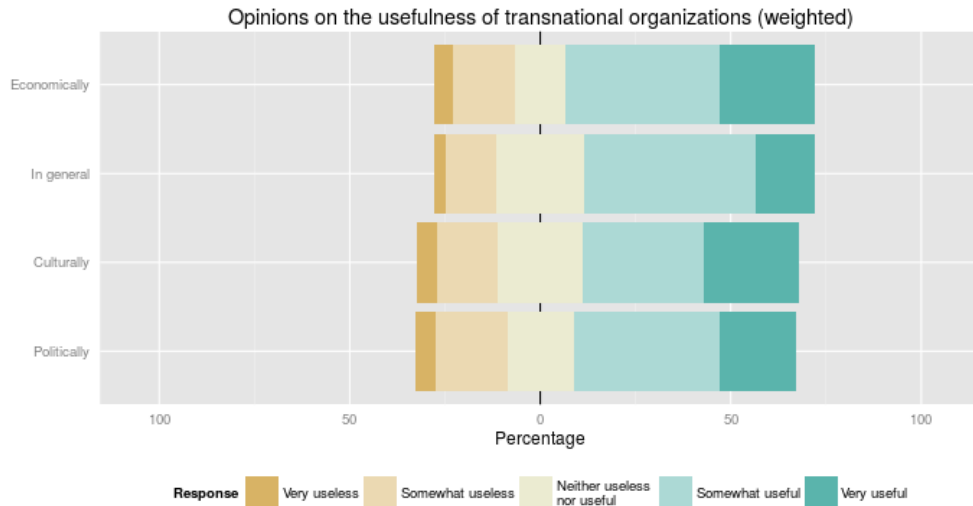
powerful overall or with regard to social policy and economic policy. This formulation of the variable will be given by the following simple equation:

$$SNC = \frac{A_1 + A_2 + A_3 + A_4 + A_5}{5}$$

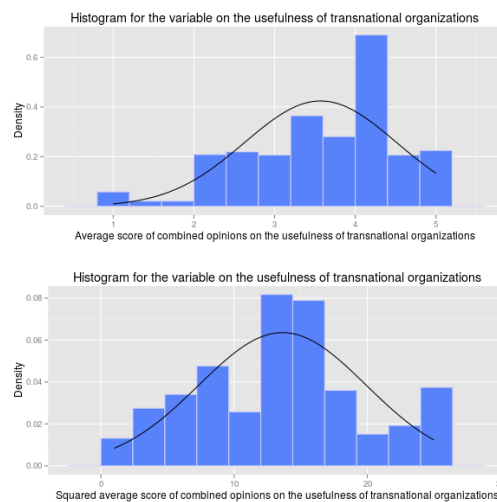
where  $A_i$  means the score from the evaluation of policy area, and the final values are the simple average of five ordinal scale dimensions.

**Usefulness of transnational organizations** The last continuous variable to be constructed from equivalent dimensions is the perceived usefulness of transnational organizations. These dimensions are offered in the questionnaire in terms of political, economic and cultural benefits, as well as an overall assessment, but the responses display little variation among them, as seen in Figure 4.8. If this similarity had resulted from a tendency of respondents to mark the same answer categories for each type of benefit, these dimensions would not lead to an appropriate continuous scale, but they would reproduce the discrete ordinal categories. However, this is not necessarily the case with this variable, since its distribution displays a reasonably continuous variation which is presented in Figure 4.9.

Nonetheless, the similarity of dimensions still means that no nuanced information is derived from this type of measurement. Instead, the indexing of different ordinal scales only served the function of leading the respondents to make precise

**Figure 4.8:** Components of the variable ‘usefulness of transnational organizations’

judgements on a larger range of options. Therefore, the variable is more appropriately understood as a unidimensional evaluation of the usefulness of transnational organizations on a scale from 4 to 20, rather than a multidimensional concept. On more practical aspects, the combined measurement results in a left-skewed distribution, which is normalized by squaring as seen in the bottom chart of Figure 4.9.

**Figure 4.9:** Distributions of the variable ‘usefulness of transnational organizations’

Finally, similar to the views on European institutions, which was also transformed through squaring, the values of the variable will be given by:

$$UTO = \frac{\left(\frac{B_1+B_2+B_3+B_4}{4}\right)^2}{5}$$

where  $B_i$  means the score from the evaluation of the type of benefit to be expected from transnational organizations, and the squared average scores are divided by 5 to bring the scale back to the range of  $[0, 5]$  so that the values are easier to interpret.

### 4.1.2 Influence of transnational institutions

Another key variable, the influence of transnational institutions, is operationalized to be measured by several dimensions which are not equivalent to each other and which call for more complex procedures. First, the actors who have direct experience in transnational institutions should be categorically distinguished from those without direct experience. Second, different types of transnational institutions, namely formal organizations and informal channels such as external offices, should be taken into consideration. For this reason, two sections of the questionnaire were devoted to questions for collecting relevant information regarding institutional influence. Third, within each group distinguished by direct experience, dichotomously defined variables have a different standing than ordinally measured factors, hence they are not suitable for regular additive indices.

The simplest way to overcome the difficulties of bringing together all these factors in a meaningful way would be acquiescing to a dichotomous variable which only takes into account the existence of direct experience. While it should be accepted that the difference between experience and non-experience is the fundamental indicator of institutional influence, disregarding more minor aspects would be problematic in other ways. Not only this would mean a loss of relevant information, that is, the removal of within group variation from the analysis, but also the analytical rigour of the analysis would be significantly damaged. Notably, there may be a problem of endogeneity between the dependent variable and the institutional influence, since subnational actors are not passive recipients of institutional effects.



More specifically, membership in transnational organizations does not have to occur irrespectively of the agency of actors. Instead, subnational actors must be aware of the opportunities of membership, if they exist, and motivated to take up ensuing responsibilities. In this sense, those who actively seek or accept positions of membership in transnational institutions would be the same actors who already have favourable views on multilevel politics, suggesting a reverse causality for which the framing of independent and dependent variables are not appropriate<sup>4</sup>. Following a similar logic, the awareness of transnational institutions or the motivation to work in them would increase the likelihood of membership and favourable views on MLP independently, suggesting the existence of an unobserved spurious variable. In order to mitigate this risk, the existence of the opportunities of transnational experience, the awareness of transnational institutions, and the motivation to work in them will be included in the measurement of institutional influence on the side of non-experience, and will be assumed as fully materialized on the side of experience.

Accordingly, the respondents who reported that they have not been a member of transnational organizations are asked to indicate whether their subnational unit is represented in such an organization, hence the existence of the opportunity of membership, how much they know about these organizations, hence the awareness of the opportunities, and how motivated they would be to represent their subnational unit at the transnational level, hence the motivation to be a member. The same questions were also repeated for external offices. In order to take into account the dichotomous property of the existence of an opportunity of membership on equal footing with the other 5-point scale questions, it is treated as mediated by the awareness of opportunities. Intuitively, if an actor has the opportunity of membership through his/her subnational unit, this is a meaningful opportunity to the extent that he/she is knowledgeable about its specificities. Similarly, even if an actor knows a great deal about transnational organizations, the absence of

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<sup>4</sup>The design of the present research is not sufficient to prove the direction of causality. Any causal inferences that can be made depend on the strength of the theoretical background as compared to alternative explanations, on the basis of which the dependent and independent variables are identified. Since this possibility of reverse causality cannot be ruled out by the theoretical framework alone, the methodologically correct strategy will be incorporating the sources of the potential problem into the analysis.

an opportunity of membership reduces the probability of an indirect institutional influence.

In terms of measurement strategy, the representation of one's subnational unit in transnational organizations or through external offices is taken as a factor of awareness, to which motivation is separately added<sup>5</sup>. The non-experience side is thus calculated by the following equation:

$$TNI_{noXP} = representation \times awareness + motivation$$

In this formulation, the values of subnational unit representation are coded 2 for 'Yes' and 1 for 'No'. For those who report 'Yes', this contributes one point for each level of awareness, while for those who report 'No', the contribution is zero.

The maximum score that could be retrieved from this equation is 15. To ensure that for the experienced actors these aspects are taken as fully materialized, 16 will be their minimum score. More specifically, the subnational units of these actors are naturally represented at the transnational level, they should know at least as much as someone who have not had direct experience, and they should be motivated enough to take up the position. On top of this baseline, the indicators that are identified as dimensions of transnational influence are the timing of membership (current or in the past), the duration of experience, the satisfaction with and the personal importance attached to it. Similarly to the measurement of non-experience, past-current dichotomy is treated as mediated by duration, by virtue of being two temporal aspects, and the other two dimensions are added separately. The corresponding scores are then calculated by the following equation:

$$TNI_{XP} = K + timing \times duration + satisfaction + importance$$

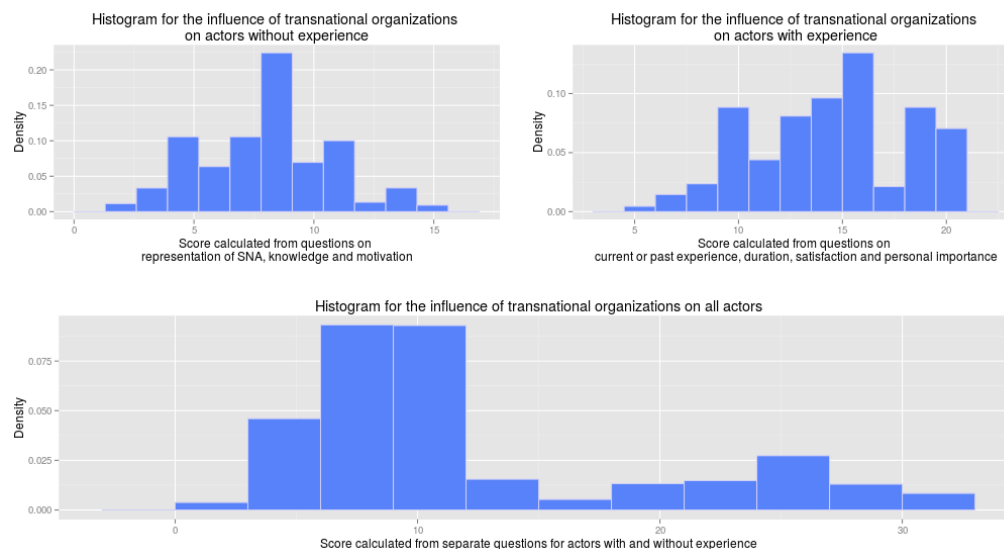
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<sup>5</sup>The same intuitive arguments could also be made for motivation. But multiplying the representation of the unit with both would increase the overall scale and the effect of the latter too much. Similarly, the central tendency of motivation displays higher values than awareness (a mean of 3.91 versus 2.45 when values are treated as numeric), hence multiplication with awareness inflates the effect of the representation of unit to a lesser extent.

where  $K$  is a constant ensuring the appropriate baseline. In the non-constant part of the equation, the variable takes values in the range of  $[5, 20]^6$ , thus the constant should take the value of 11 to raise the baseline to 16.

Both groups of non-experience and experience have near-normal distributions in themselves, as seen in the top row of Figure 4.10. Thereby, when two groups are combined, a bimodal distribution could be expected. But with the group of non-experience constituting the majority with 75%, the combined distribution is more appropriately depicted as right-skewed. Therefore, a transformation which compresses the differences across higher values will normalize the distribution.

**Figure 4.10:** Distributions of the variable ‘the influence of transnational organizations’

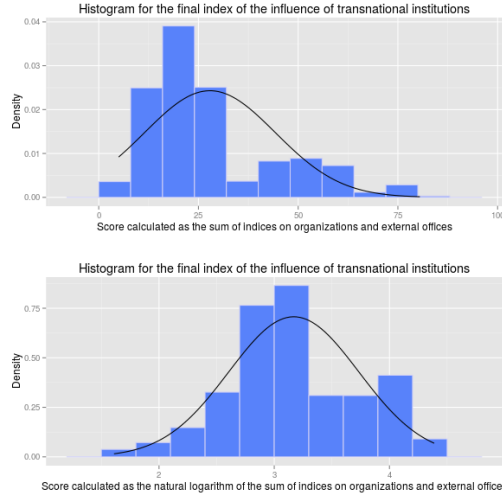


While these calculations only measure the influence of formal transnational organizations, the same procedures are repeated for external offices as the informal aspect. The only difference is that the experienced part resulted in a range beginning with 7, hence the constant of its equation was corrected as 9. Although formal and informal institutions are considered together for an eventual measurement of transnational institutional influence, a higher weight is given to formal organizations for two main reasons. First, as a theoretical concern, the systematic nature of formal institutions can be seen as having greater capacity of influence in the political sphere. Second, as a practical concern, only 7.78% of the sample

<sup>6</sup>The variable could theoretically take values between 3 and 20, but the minimum value obtained in the actual sample is 5.

report experience in external offices, hence a much larger part of the variation in the informal aspect comes from the side of non-experience. For these reasons, a weighting of 3-to-2 is applied in favour of transnational organizations, resulting in the right-skewed distribution shown in the top row of Figure 4.11.

**Figure 4.11:** Normalization of the variable ‘the influence of transnational organizations’



Finally, the normalization of the distribution is achieved through natural logarithm. Taking into account both the weighting of formal and informal aspects, and the final transformation, the variable of ‘the influence of the transnational institutions’ is given by the following equation:

$$TNI = \ln \left( \frac{3}{2} \cdot (TNI_{nonXP}^{formal} + TNI_{XP}^{formal}) + (TNI_{nonXP}^{informal} + TNI_{XP}^{informal}) \right)$$

The use of this weighting and logarithmic transformation have enabled the measurement to be compressed to the range of [1.61, 4.39], which is smaller than the ranges of previously constructed continuous variables, but sufficiently close and within the limits of [0, 5].

### 4.1.3 Dichotomous variables

In addition to the composite variables which have been discussed so far, several other variables are designed to have dichotomous values. These include two questions regarding European funds, three major ways of conducting political ac-

tivities related to multilevel politics, and five types of political identification. The main reasons for their operationalization as dichotomous involve the fact that these variables had to be measured individually, ruling out the possibility of generating numeric scores with large enough ranges from multiple questions. In addition, for most of them, saying 'yes' or 'no' is more logical than an assessment on a scale. Even where question types similar to Likert scale could be used, the reliability of numeric treatment for statistical operations decreases with shorter scales whereas the likelihood of measurement error increases with longer scales.

Dichotomous values are obtained indirectly in two variables with regard to the European funds, one determining the receipt of these funds, and the other determining the respondent's attitude towards them. In the first question, three response options which correspond to receiving European funds in the past, present or near future have been considered as 'yes', while never receiving and no knowledge have been considered as 'no'. In the second question, the participants were asked to assess the importance of European funds for subnational development with four ordered response options. In order to strengthen the validity of reducing these to a dichotomous measurement, first two options were formulated affirmatively whereas last two options were formulated negatively.

As a result, 79% of respondents have given a positive answer to the first question, and 90% have given a positive answer to the second question. It should be noted that weighting according to country representation has had a strong effect on these percentages; the unweighted rates are 61% and 78% respectively. The main reason behind this discrepancy is the distinction between EU and non-EU countries, and the over-representation of the latter through Switzerland and Norway which do not have access to European funds. The same logic also applies to the difference between the two questions; even if one has not benefited from these funds directly, he/she can still think that they are important, while the opposite is less likely. This is again most visible in the non-EU countries; for instance in Switzerland, positive responses rise from 4% to 44% from the first question to the second.

As a separate issue, respondents were asked to state directly whether they think three methods of conducting external relations are effective in their opinion: through direct initiatives, through transnational institutions and through mediation of national governments. An overwhelming majority of 92% find direct relations

an effective method, while the confirmation of transnational institutions and national delegations remain at the same and more moderate level with 66% and 65% respectively. The equivalence between the latter two options suggests that autonomy from national constraints is not necessarily seen as a precondition for effective external actions.

Finally, five types of political identification were asked to observe how participants depicted themselves as political actors: local/regional, national, European, cultural/ethnic and ideological. It should be emphasized that dichotomous values were not obtained through dummy coding from a single multiple-choice question, but respondents had the chance to mark as many as applied, since options are not necessarily mutually exclusive especially in the possibility of a multilevel context. The results display great variation: local/regional 91%, national 41%, European 34%, ethnic/cultural 11% and ideological/political party-related 73%. While local/regional political identification is naturally the highest ranking category, the fact that it is not closer to 100% can be explained by a refusal of political identification or a dissatisfaction with the formulation offered in the questionnaire.

## **4.2 Explaining subnational attitudes:**

### **Bivariate analyses**

The univariate analyses have discussed 15 variables, 5 of which have continuous scales and 10 of which have dichotomous scales. All of these variables are drawn from a common theoretical background and they can be expected to display co-variations. An examination of these co-variations will help to hone the research in several respects. First, some of the constructed variables are intended to measure similar aspects, hence a choice has to be made for further analyses. Second, the main research question is interested in their association with the dependent variable, hence relatively high degrees of correlation are expected between the dependent variable and all other individual variables. Third, these variables are posited as being relevant independently from each other, hence low degrees of correlation are expected among them. Fourth, the eventual analysis will be conducted through a multivariate statistical model, as presented in the next chapter, and several methodological assumptions must be met for this purpose. In addition

to low degrees of correlation among independent variables, that is, the absence of multi-collinearity, the relationship of continuous covariates to the dependent variable must be linear. The first subsection will present findings concerning all possible associations among variables, and the second subsection will focus the attention on their ability to predict the dependent variable.

### 4.2.1 Exploring co-variations

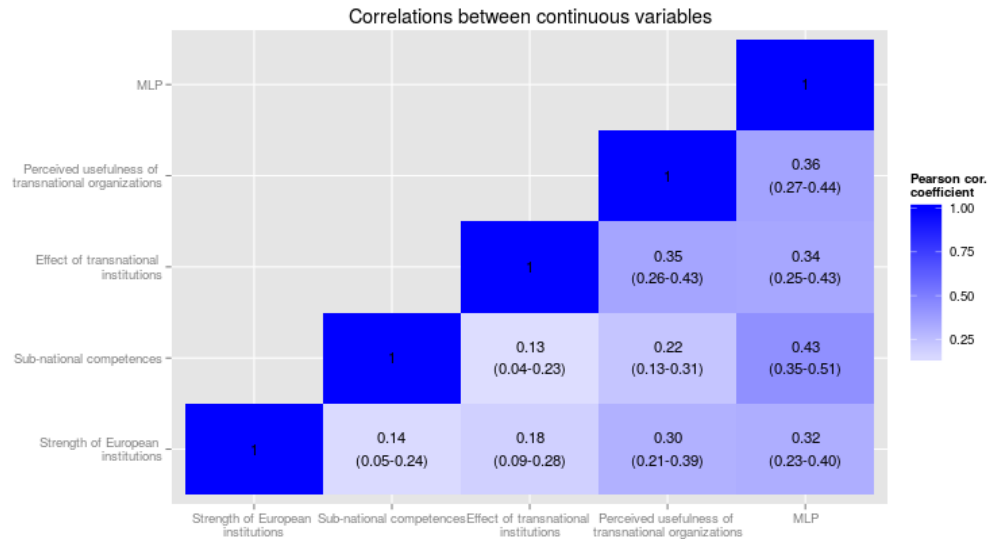
Given different scales of variables, the exploration of co-variations will proceed in three steps: among continuous variables, among binary variables, and between continuous and binary variables. For the first group, Pearson correlation coefficients will be reported; for the second group, Phi coefficients<sup>7</sup>; and for the third group, mean differences across dichotomous categories. Confidence intervals will also be provided to test the significance of findings, drawing on  $p$  distributions for correlations, and  $t$  distributions for mean differences.

**Continuous variables** Figure 4.12 gives the Pearson correlation coefficients for the association among continuous variables and 99% confidence intervals between parentheses. As expected, each of the associations between these variables is positive. Although all coefficients are statistically significant at the 99% level, it should be remarked that the lower end of confidence intervals of coefficients among variables on European institutions, subnational competences and institutional influence is too close to 0. On the other hand, all variables appear to be more strongly linked to MLP while the variable on the usefulness of transnational organizations display more similarity to MLP than the other three.

Considering these results in the light of the designation of MLP as the dependent variable, these correlations would have several implications. First, a relatively weak relationship among the three independent variables and their stronger relationship to the dependent variable suggest that these variables do, indeed, represent different aspects of multilevel politics, and independent variables are good predictors of the dependent variable. Second, nevertheless, the unusual similarity between the usefulness of transnational organizations and MLP, in terms of their

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<sup>7</sup>Phi coefficient is calculated from a  $2 \times 2$  contingency table of two binary variables. In fact, when Pearson correlation coefficient is applied to two binary variables, it returns the same value as Phi coefficient.

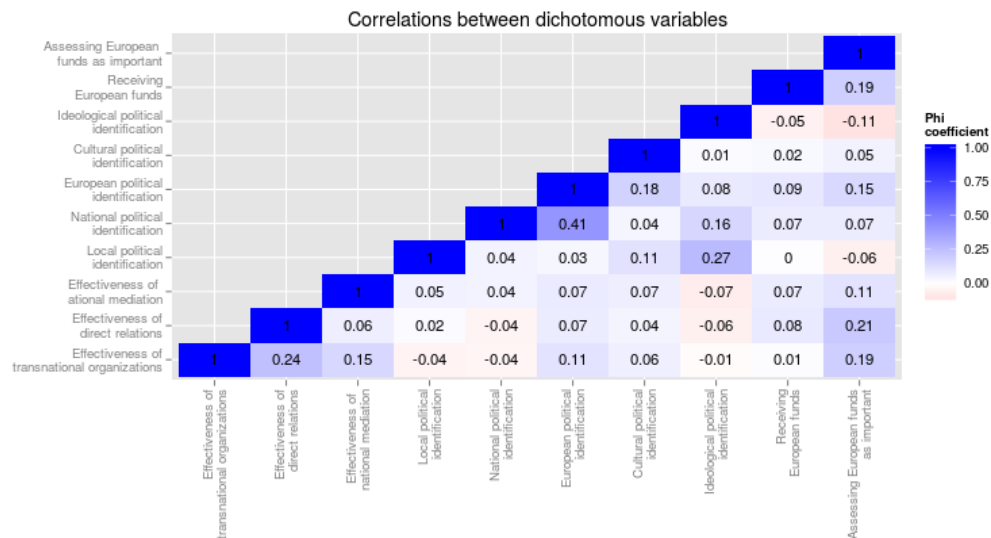
**Figure 4.12:** Correlations among continuous variables

relationships to the remaining two variables, suggests that, in fact, the former may not measure an attitude which is categorically different from the latter. Given the components of the variables, the former is more likely to be a measure of attitudes which focuses in more detail to the formal-organizational aspect of MLP. For this reason, its use as a covariate in a multivariate model may be methodologically problematic.

**Dichotomous variables** Figure 4.13 gives the Phi coefficients for the bivariate associations among dichotomous variables. The majority of coefficients are too close to 0, hence without any possibility of significant relationship. The most notable exception is the correlation between national political identification and European political identification, on a confidence interval between 0.33 and 0.49 at the 99% level, which would suggest an interesting result in that these do not constitute rival forms of identification. Given that a similarly strong association is not observed with the local level, this should be seen as a specific attribute between national and European levels, rather than a general pattern between all political levels.

Another relatively strong relationship can be observed between ideological and local forms of political identification, on a confidence interval between 0.18 and 0.35 at the 99% level. Furthermore, the strength of relationship with ideologi-



**Figure 4.13:** Correlations among dichotomous variables

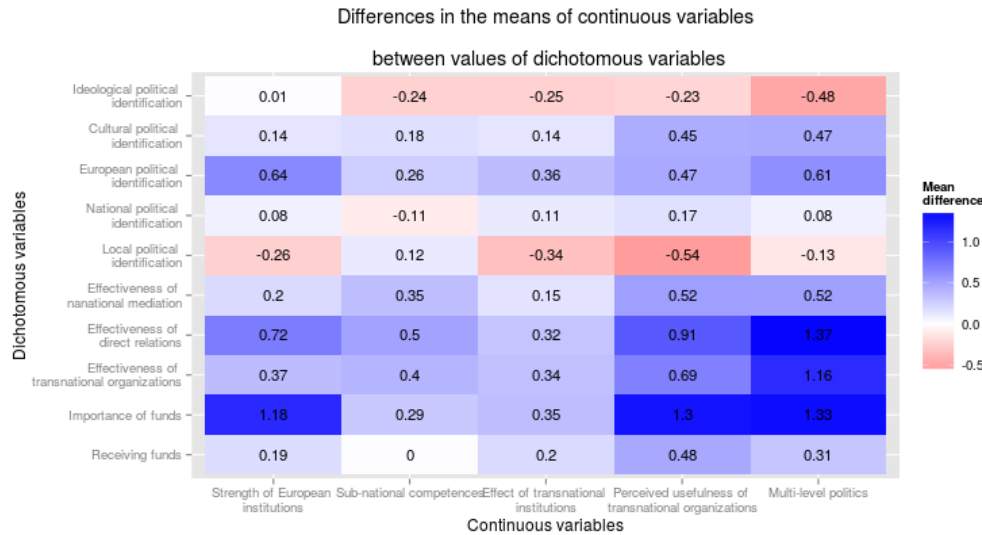
cal identification decreases as the political level moves towards the supra-national. Self-description of respondents on the Left-Right scale might shed light on this issue; however, the distribution of Left-Right scale among those who chose ideological identification (mean 3.99, SD 1.97) is very similar to the overall distribution (mean 4.12, SD 1.94) with a small tendency towards further left. Thereby, the relationship between local and ideological identifications cannot be explained by an overlap between localism/regionalism and one side of the political spectrum. On the opposite side of this, the strongest relationship of cultural identification is with European identification, on a confidence interval between 0.09 and 0.26, supporting the idea that political identifications which emphasize distinctiveness from the national establishment are compatible with European political identification. This can be seen as a counterpart of the fact that the regionalist parties tend to favour European integration, as discussed in Chapter 1.

Apart from political identifications, methods of conducting multilevel political activities also display relatively strong correlations, notably between direct relations and transnational institutions with a confidence interval between 0.15 and 0.33 at the 99% level. This result suggests that these two methods are more likely to be seen as complementary rather than alternatives. Meanwhile, national mediation can be seen as a weaker complement to transnational institutions, with a coefficient on a confidence interval between 0.06 and 0.24 at the 99% level, whereas

its relationship with direct relations is statistically insignificant. For the subject of European funds, it can be observed that the two aspects of receiving and considering them important are not very highly correlated. In comparison, the assessment of European funds as important has a stronger association with other dichotomous variables, especially the effectiveness of direct relations and transnational organizations, while its relationship with ideological political identification displays the most notable negative correlation in the table, with a confidence interval between -0.20 and -0.02 at the 99% level. While it is necessary to take stock of these correlations when explanatory models are interpreted, it is difficult to detect an overwhelming similarity between any two variables which would undermine their use in such models.

**Mean differences across binary categories** Figure 4.14 presents the mean differences in the continuous variables according to the answers given to dichotomous variables. Similarly to the results among continuous variables, multilevel politics constitutes the variable which displays the strongest overall association with other variables. The significance and specificities of these associations will be examined in detail separately in the next section. Also similarly, the usefulness of transnational organizations gives very parallel results to those of multilevel politics, suggesting again that it does not offer a sufficiently independent variable which would help to explain the latter. For this reason, it will be considered as an unreliable measure and neglected henceforth. Its components could be considered as additional dimensions of the views on multilevel politics and included in its index; however, this would bias the latter too much in favour of institutional aspects leading to a possible endogeneity with all other institutionally relevant variables. Thus, the perceived usefulness of transnational organizations, as designed in this study, is neither a good dependent variable nor a good covariate, and should be excluded from upcoming analyses. Given that there are other variables that can replace it to measure the perceived effectiveness of transnational organizations, this can indeed be dropped from the analysis.

Among the other three continuous variables, the one measuring opinions on the strength of European institutions displays the strongest association with dichotomous variables. Most notably, considering European funds as important shifts its mean score upwards with an effect between 0.84 and 1.52 at the 99%

**Figure 4.14:** Co-variations of continuous and dichotomous variables

confidence level. Considering the direct link between European funds and European institutions, such a large association is to be expected. The same effect of selecting direct relations as an effective method of multilevel politics is between 0.31 and 1.12, while European political identification increases its mean by an amount between 0.42 and 0.87 at the 99% confidence level. The last statistically significant dichotomous variable is the effectiveness of transnational organizations with an effect within the 99% confidence interval between 0.14 and 0.59.

As for subnational competences, perceived importance of European funds has a much smaller effect in comparison, though it is statistically significant at the 99% level. Other significant associations include, similarly, the effectiveness of direct relations and transnational organizations, and European political identification, while, differently, effectiveness of national mediation displays an effect between 0.18 and 0.52 at the 99% confidence level. At the same time, ideological political identification has a negative effect of between -0.43 and -0.06. On the other hand, the variable measuring the influence of transnational institutions on subnational actors appears to be significantly associated with all dichotomous variables, including the receipt of European funds, whereas the effect is smaller in each case in comparison to the other two. Given that the majority of other variables are conceptualized as pertaining to specific aspects of institutionalist theory and this variable as pertaining to a more comprehensive understanding of insti-

tutional influence, these multiple associations are theoretically consistent. One particularly notable result is the negative effect of local political identification on the change in its mean between -0.51 and -0.17 at the 99% confidence level, which suggests that the influence of transnational institutions leads to a lower tendency to identify oneself as a local politician.

In sum, although there are several pairwise relatively strong co-variations among independent variables, these do not follow a systematic pattern. For this reason, they will not be considered as damaging the methodological rigour of a multivariate model which includes the variables in question, with the exception of the usefulness of transnational organizations. Yet the possibility of the mediation of one variable by another will not be ruled out completely, and will be tested through interaction terms between the influence of transnational institutions and the most likely candidates which may mediate it.

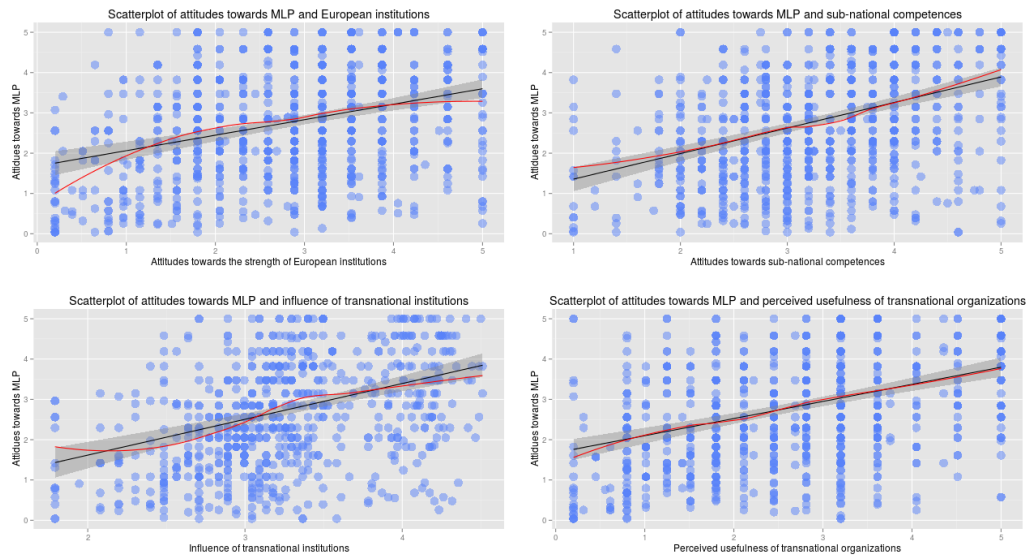
#### **4.2.2 Explaining the views on multilevel politics**

Having established that attitudes towards multilevel politics display the strongest association with the remainder of variables, a closer look at its individual relationship with covariates is in order. While interpretations based on significance levels will be informative for hypothesis testing, the visualization of the relationships will allow the assumption checks on linearity. The relationships with continuous variables will be visualized through scatter-plots while those with dichotomous variables will be presented in the form of box-plots. Scatter-plots display the density of distribution with the help of partially transparent points, whereby darker blue indicates higher density due to overlapping points. In addition, black lines represent the linear fit between variables, accompanied by a grey area marking the confidence interval. Red lines display the locally weighted scatter-plot smoothing (LOWESS) curve representing the local variability of the relationship across the plot (Cleveland, 1979). The proximity of linear and LOWESS lines suggests the linearity of the relationship. In box-plots, the observations between the first and the third quantiles are represented by the boxes, while the horizontal lines within boxes mark the median, and the circles mark the location of the mean.

**Continuous covariates** Figure 4.15 shows four relevant scatter-plots. In all plots, top-left and bottom-right areas appear relatively empty, and mid-sections display higher density, confirming a positive linear relationship with the dependent variable. At the same time, the distribution of points with high vertical distances to the linear line suggests that the observed relationships are not too obvious. It is important to note this non-obvious relationship, because one of the overarching principles in the design of this research has been testing whether the fundamental claim of new institutionalism, that institutions matter, is a self-evident conjecture, a negligible epiphenomenon, or a phenomenon worth analysing and discussing. The positive relationships shown below support the new-institutionalist theory, yet the prevailing dispersion supports the view that the significance of institutions is not self-evident. Therefore, in view of the data, it can be more confidently restated that the hypotheses tested in this research are neither a restatement of the obvious, nor reliant on unverifiable counterfactuals.

To examine the continuous variables in detail, first, the linear model with the strength of European institutions results in a line with an intercept 1.68 and slope 0.38 significant at the 99.9% confidence level. The slope is estimated to be in the confidence interval between 0.29 and 0.48 at the 99% level. The curvilinear prediction is steeper at lower values of the covariate and flatter at higher values, and it follows the linear fit in the middle; the difference between the lowest-ranking and moderate attitudes has a stronger effect on the dependent variable as compared to the variation within moderate attitudes, and especially the difference between moderate and the highest-ranking attitudes. Nonetheless, the LOWESS curve does not remain sufficiently distinct from the linear fit to discredit the plausibility of the linear fit.

The attitudes towards subnational competences results in a stronger relationship with multilevel politics, with an intercept of 0.72 and a slope of 0.63 significant at the 99.9% confidence level. The slope is estimated to be a minimum of 0.51 and a maximum of 0.75 within the 99% confidence interval. The curvilinear prediction remains very close to the linear fit, although slight divergences imply that the relationship becomes strong as the covariate moves from lower towards higher values. The association of the perceived usefulness of transnational organizations is weaker with a slope of 0.42 significant at the 99.9% confidence level, and it has little variability across the values of the covariate.

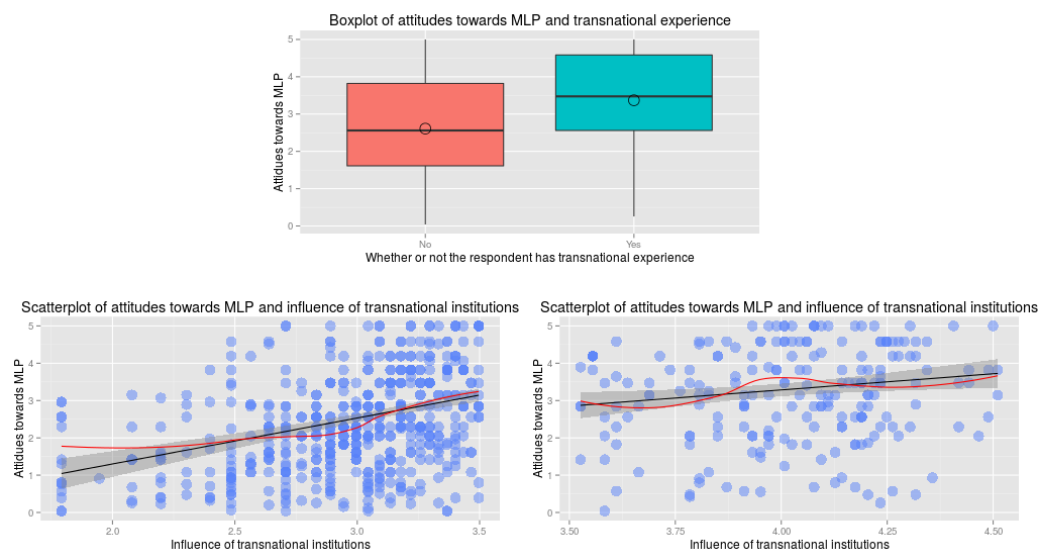
**Figure 4.15:** Linear fit of continuous variables with the views on multilevel politics

The influence of transnational institutions presents a more complex picture. The linear curve takes an intercept of -0.16 and a slope of 0.89, significant at the 99.9% level. The confidence interval of the slope at the 99% level is demarcated by 0.66 and 1.12. The S shape taken by the LOWESS curve suggests that the relationship is strongest in the middle section of the distribution, and more moderate at lower and upper ends of the distribution. Although the lines are not too divergent to necessitate a fundamental questioning of linearity, a closer look which takes account of the components of indexing will be useful. The steepest part of the curve appears to be between scores of approximately 3.00 and 3.50, which correspond to the minima of the ranges of the subgroups with external office experience and transnational organization experience respectively. In other words, the association between institutional influence and multilevel politics seems to be weaker within the group which is dominated by those with transnational experience.

The separate inspection of the two groups reveals this difference more clearly. In Figure 4.16, the box-plot displays the difference in MLP scores between those with and without transnational experience in an organization or external office. The difference in the mean is 0.76 and significant at the 99.9% confidence level, confirming the variation between groups. However, for within groups variations, the scatter-plots show that the slope of the linear line is much lower in the group which scores higher than the 3.50 cut-off point. More specifically, the linear line in

the first group has a slope of 1.23 significant at the 99.9% confidence level, while that of the second group has a slope of 0.87 significant only at the 99% confidence level. This difference in the slope is still small enough to allow the treatment of this variable as displaying a linear relationship to the views on MLP. Given the benefits of the continuous measurement of transnational influence as discussed above, the analysis will proceed with it, but the substitution with the dichotomous measurement will still be interpreted as a background to the comparative case study.

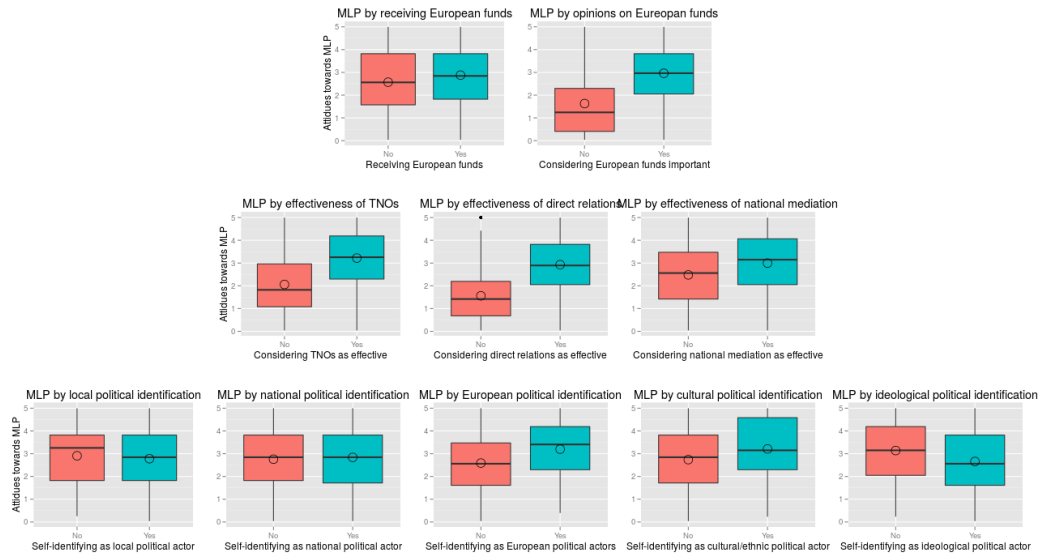
**Figure 4.16:** Linear fit of the transnational institutional influence with the views on multilevel politics



**Binary covariates** The relationships between the attitudes towards multilevel politics and all dichotomous variables are summarized by box-plots in Figure 4.17 in three groups. In the first row, variables related to European funds display visibly distinct distributions. Receiving European funds appears to have a minor effect on attitudes towards multilevel politics, changing its mean by 0.31 at the 99% confidence level. Corresponding confidence interval ranges between 0.01 and 0.62, suggesting a marginally significant and ambiguous estimate. On the other hand, the mean of multilevel politics varies by 1.33 between considering European funds as unimportant and important, significant at the 99.9% level. Thus, opinions on European funds are expected to be a strong predictor. Meanwhile, the difference

between these two variables can be interpreted as bringing forward attitude-based factors as more relevant to the overall research design as compared to fact-based factors.

**Figure 4.17:** Change in the distribution of the views on multilevel politics by dichotomous categories



As for methods of conducting multilevel politics, the effectiveness of transnational organizations and especially direct relations appear to have a strong relation to the opinions on multilevel politics, while that of national mediation is less considerable, even though all three are significant at the 99.9% confidence level. More specifically, the mean score of multilevel politics increases by 1.37 between the values of the variable on transnational organizations, and 1.16 between the values of the variable on direct relations. The effect of the variable on national mediation remains at 0.52, within a confidence interval between 0.26 and 0.78 at the 99% level. Therefore, the views on the effectiveness of transnational organizations and direct relations are potential candidates for strong predictors, whereas the variation that could be explained by national mediation remains limited. Additionally, having dropped the perceived usefulness of transnational organizations from the analysis, the dichotomous assessment of their effectiveness proves to be a suitable replacement. Since the former has been shown to fail at providing a multidimensional measurement, this replacement does not cause a serious loss of nuance either.



Finally, among the types of political identification, European and cultural types have a more apparent positive impact, and the ideological type has a negative impact on the scores of multilevel politics, whereas the magnitude of association with local and political identification seems small. Accordingly -0.13 change by local identification and 0.08 change by national identification are statistically insignificant. On the other hand, the 0.61 mean change by European political identification is significant at the 99.9% confidence level, and the 0.47 mean change by cultural/ethnic political identification is significant at the 99% level with a corresponding confidence interval ranging between 0.07 and 0.86. One of the few variables which shows a negative relationship, political identification with an ideology or political party decreases the mean score of multilevel politics by 0.48, which is significant at the 99.9% confidence level.

### 4.3 Implications of the preliminary findings

The bivariate analyses yield results that largely confirmed the hypothesized association. Yet the meaning of these findings should take into account the basic properties of the variables that have been discussed in the first section. Above all, for each observed relationship with the dependent variable, it should be remarked that the estimated change in the views on MLP is largely within the range of moderately negative and highly positive views, whereas highly negative views constitute a small part of the sample.

First, the influence of transnational institutions displays the strongest relationship as compared to other continuous variables, although this is partly due to its smaller range. Overall, those with transnational experience are estimated to score 0.76 points higher than those without experience, while posited factors for each group also prove positively related to the views on MLP given the slope. For the first group, it is seen that the combined effects of the representation of subnational unit, the awareness of transnational institutions and the motivation to work in them, considerably increase the favourableness of the views on MLP. When the assumption of linearity for the whole range is dropped, it is even found that these are more relevant than the factors posited for those with transnational experience.

Second, the views on the strength of both European institutions and subnational authorities are strongly linked to the dependent variable as well. When these

two are compared, the attitudes towards subnational competences come forth as a more important predictor of the attitudes towards MLP, as compared to the attitudes towards European institutions. In this sense, for subnational actors who favour MLP, a higher degree of self-government for their local and regional entities has priority over supranational integration. However, this difference might be partially due to the way the variables are constructed. In the case of European institutions, the relationship is between two variables which mostly represent moderate to highly positive views, hence it returns a modest slope. In the case of subnational authorities, the independent variable covers more extreme views on both ends, hence it is more likely to make more drastic increases across its values.

Furthermore, European funds seem to offer a strong incentive for MLP. Interestingly, the actual receipt of the fund is not quite important. But the great majority who think that these funds are important for subnational development report very high scores on the views on MLP as compared to the small minority who think otherwise. Similarly, the small minority who think that even direct relations cannot be an effective way of external relations score significantly lower than the majority who think otherwise. Among other options, the link of the effectiveness of transnational organizations to the views on MLP is much stronger than that of national mediation. This is hardly surprising since the use of national channels does not necessitate a fundamental change in the political system. Moreover, the removal of national barriers is the least popular dimension of the views on MLP, whereas the aspects corresponding to direct relations and organizations are the most popular. Therefore, while transnational organizations and direct relations are seen as more likely to make an impact, the national layer is not necessarily ruled out from the multiple levels of MLP.

As for political identification, local and national identities seem to be unrelated to the views on MLP, while European and cultural/ethnic identities display significant relations. Thereby, the supranational dimension of MLP is sociologically represented in the form of European identification, and the subnational dimension in the form of cultural or ethnic distinctiveness rather than local/regional identities more broadly. In the opposite direction, ideological/party-political identification is the only variable with a significant negative relationship to the dependent variable. Accordingly, strong ideological positions, irrespective of the location in the political spectrum, are not seen as compatible with multilevel politics. It is true

that multilevel politics does not necessarily pertain to the distinctive priorities of ideological camps, but this discrepancy materializes not merely as negligence, but in the form of apparent contradiction.

Almost all hypothesized relationships are therefore confirmed by the survey data when they are assessed individually, with the exception of political identification. However, given the small albeit visible correlations among independent variables, the evaluation of the isolated relevance of each requires hypothesis tests through multivariate analysis. This will allow the testing of the broad institutionalist argument as a self-contained explanatory model, and the relative weight of its components which are discussed in this chapter separately. The following chapter will advance the analysis to the next level in this respect.



## **Chapter 5**

# **Institutional effects and multilevel politics: a multivariate model**

The aim of this chapter is to build a multivariate model to test the hypotheses for which the previous chapter implied confirmatory results. In addition to the general scientific principle that the association between independent and dependent variables should be tested by holding all other relevant factors constant, a multivariate analysis is particularly necessary in view of the theoretical framework. Namely, all hypotheses are derived from a common theoretical background, hence they are inherently interlinked. In this sense, bivariate analyses do not take into account the variance collectively explained by multiple independent variables. In the multivariate model, these variables will be integrated as covariates which predict the values of the independent variable.

Moreover, the common theoretical background of the hypotheses means that they collectively constitute a comprehensive and coherent argument. Thereby, the explanatory power of a multivariate model which includes them will testify to the validity of the eclectic new-institutionalist argument as a whole. For this purpose, the first section will discuss the model specification, and in doing so, it will test the statistical significance of models containing different numbers of variables in comparison to each other. It will show that the model which provides the most explanatory power contains all hypothesized relationships.

While multivariate models are a theoretically and methodologically more rigorous way to test the hypotheses, certain assumptions must be met. The previous

chapter has already transformed the variables so that they are normally distributed. The bivariate analyses have shown that the posited relationships can be expected to display linear associations, and that the correlations among independent variables are not high enough to warrant multicollinearity. Yet these methodological requirements will be double-checked through regression diagnostics which will also address the issues of influential observations and heteroskedasticity.

When the cross-national nature of the dataset is considered, further precautions against unobserved country-based factors will be necessary. Although multilevel modelling would be an ideal strategy, the limitations of the data make this type of analysis inaccurate. Instead, the models to be specified will include country fixed effects, and will take the form given by the following linear equation:

$$MLP_{ic} = \kappa_c + \beta_1 IV_{1,ic} + \beta_2 IV_{2,ic} + \cdots + \beta_p IV_{p,ic} + \varepsilon_{ic}$$

where the subscript  $i$  denotes individual units of observation,  $c$  countries and  $p$  variables, and  $MLP$  stands for the views on multilevel politics,  $IV$  for independent variables,  $\kappa$  for the fixed country effects, and  $\varepsilon$  for the error term. In order to further elaborate on potential country effects, the model will be re-examined in more detail within national subsets of the data. This exercise will show that no systematic pattern can be found in the variation at the country level.

After having specified the model which represents the best statistical fit and confirmed its validity, the results yielded by the model will be interpreted in the last section. In the light of these findings, it will be shown that the majority of the hypotheses are confirmed, and for a minority no sufficient evidence or contradictory evidence is found. Thus, not only the broad argument provides a strong explanation for the institutionalization of multilevel politics, but also its specific constituents are mostly relevant with a few exceptions.

## 5.1 Model specification

The empirical strategy of model specification will be comparing several possibilities between the smallest and the largest alternatives with respect to the available variables in the survey data. In order to simplify the procedure in a way compatible with the theoretical background, at first, the differences between nested

models will consist of several variables, instead of adding or dropping one variable in each stage. For this purpose, six groups are identified with regard to the strands of the new institutionalist theory, posited and rival explanations, and some potentially relevant additional factors.

The baseline will consist of only one variable, namely the influence of transnational institutions, which represents the fundamental claim of the theory that institutions matter. The second group will consist of two types of power distribution across levels of governance—European and subnational. The third will consist of the rationalist explanations, namely those related to European funds and the effectiveness of formal or informal institutions. The third will consist of sociological explanations in the form of political identification. The fourth will consist of factors that are not expected to have an effect as they traditionally relate to the domestic sphere of politics. Finally, demographic factors will be considered in a separate set of variables.

The model which makes the last significant improvement to the previous nested model, with regard to the above mentioned sets of variables, will be taken as the benchmark. In the next stage, the variables not included which return significant coefficients in their respective models will be added to this benchmark, in order to test if they improve the explanatory power of the latter. Once a model is specified in this way, necessary adjustments will be made in the light of regression diagnostics, and the sufficiency of country fixed effects will be considered for possible further modifications.

### 5.1.1 Hierarchical modelling

The model specification follows a forward hierarchical strategy, beginning with the baseline model and adding the remaining five sets of variables in each step. Finally, an additional model tests several interaction terms, which are selected based on observed correlations and intuitive proximity. The results are presented in Table 5.1, marking each added component by horizontal dashed lines. The bottom section of the table gives model fit statistics to be interpreted for the model selection<sup>1</sup>. In particular, the row of the reduction in residual sum of squares (RSS)

<sup>1</sup>The  $R^2$  values reported in the table are calculated from the same models designed with an intercept, since the unusually high  $R^2$ s that are returned by fixed-effect-only models without intercept are difficult to interpret in model comparison.

Table 5.1: Hierarchical modelling

	Dependent Variable: Views on Multilevel Politics					
	Baseline	Model I	Model II	Model III	Model IV	Model V
Influence of transnational institutions	0.85 ***	0.68 ***	0.46 ***	0.42 ***	0.44 ***	0.44 ***
Strength of European institutions		0.25 ***	0.20 ***	0.20 ***	0.18 ***	0.18 ***
Competences of subnational authorities		0.53 ***	0.44 ***	0.43 ***	0.42 ***	0.42 ***
Importance of European funds			0.45 ***	0.42 ***	0.42 **	0.41 **
Effectiveness of TNOs for external activity			0.71 ***	0.73 ***	0.70 ***	0.70 ***
Effectiveness of direct relations for external activity			0.37 *	0.36 *	0.32 *	0.32 *
Political identity: European				0.09	0.08	0.06
Political identity: Cultural				0.29 *	0.33 **	0.31 *
Political identity: Ideological				-0.20 *	-0.19 *	-0.21 *
Ideological position: Left v. Centre					0.04	0.04
Ideological position: Right v. Centre					-0.27 *	-0.28 **
Age					0.00	0.00
Gender: Male v. Female					-0.09	-0.09
Gender: Other v. Female					-0.35	-0.33
Education: Higher					0.13	0.13
Subnational unit: Other v. Local					0.59	0.62
Subnational unit: Administrative region v. Local					-0.08	-0.08
Subnational unit: Legislative region v. Local					-0.06	-0.07
Effectiveness of national channels for external activity					0.07	0.07
Political identity: National					0.06	0.05
Political identity: Local					0.10	0.13
Pol. id.: Ideological $\times$ Id. pos.: Left						-0.08
Pol. id.: Ideological $\times$ Id. pos.: Right						0.46
Inf. TN institutions $\times$ St. Eu. Institutions						0.06
Inf. TN institutions $\times$ Imp. Eu. Funds						-0.01
Inf. TN institutions $\times$ Effectiveness of TNOs						0.13
Inf. TN institutions $\times$ Pol. id.: European						-0.13
Adjusted $R^2$	0.17	0.34	0.42	0.43	0.43	0.43
F ratio	157.10 ***	192.30 ***	200.60 ***	186.30 ***	149.70 ***	140.40 ***
	(df=28; 774)	(df=30; 772)	(df=33; 769)	(df=36; 766)	(df=45; 757)	(df=51; 751)
Residual Std. Error	1.24	1.10	1.04	1.03	1.03	1.03
		252.3 ***	111.0 ***	12.7 **	11.9	2.9
Reduction in Residual Sum of Squares (RSS)	(df=28; 774)	(df=2; 772)	(df=3; 769)	(df=3; 766)	(df=9; 757)	(df=3; 754)
						8.8

Notes: Significance codes: \*\*\* $p < 0.001$  < \*\* $p < 0.01$  < \* $p < 0.05$  < . $p < 0.10$ ; Number of observations: 802 in all models; 27 country fixed effects are included in all models



highlights if each column offers a significantly more powerful model in comparison to the previous nested model. According to the last significant result in this aspect, Model III is the best option and the benchmark upon which the eventual model can be specified.

To describe the model building process, the addition of the component with power distribution variables improves the model fit significantly, as seen both in the doubling of the  $R^2$  and in the large reduction in RSS. The addition of the component with variables on material incentives and effectiveness also has a similar effect, while the contribution of the views on direct relations is relatively less substantive. The model improvement decelerates when political identification variables are added with one insignificant coefficient for European political identification, but the reduction in RSS is still significant at  $p < 0.01$ . The models cannot be improved further with new variables,  $R^2$  remaining at the same level and RSS reduction becoming statistically insignificant.

Nonetheless, self-positioning on the right of the political spectrum consistently yields significant coefficients. Furthermore, the sole potentially relevant interaction is between ideological political identification and self-positioning on the right-wing. These two can be used to expand the explanatory power of Model III, as seen in Table 5.2. Each addition makes a marginal contribution to the reduction in RSS, but when Model III.1 is compared with Model III.3, the improvement by 11.99 in RSS is significant at  $p < 0.05$ . One problem is that the inclusion of the interaction terms reduces the significance of the main coefficient of ideological political identification to a marginally insignificant level, which will be considered as another aspect of the relatively low explanatory power of sociological variables.

Therefore, Model III.3 will be taken as the model which represents the best fit with the data. The coefficients of ideological political identification and its interaction with right-wing self-positioning will be treated as statistically significant considering their  $p$  values slightly over 0.05 level (0.051 and 0.080 respectively). The regression diagnostics in the next subsection will be run on this model. However, taking into account the small differences between the variants of Model III, the investigation of country-level variation will be conducted with the shortest version due to the small sample sizes of the subsets.

**Table 5.2:** Further specification of Model III

	Dependent Variable: views on MLP		
	Model III.1	Model III.2	Model III.3
Influence of transnational institutions	0.42 ***	0.43 ***	0.42 ***
Strength of European institutions	0.20 ***	0.19 ***	0.19 ***
Competences of subnational authorities	0.43 ***	0.43 ***	0.43 ***
Importance of European funds	0.42 **	0.41 **	0.42 **
Effectiveness of TNOs for external activity	0.73 ***	0.71 ***	0.70 ***
Effectiveness of direct relations for external activity	0.36 *	0.31 *	0.32 *
Political identity: European	0.09	0.09	0.09
Political identity: Cultural	0.29 *	0.33 **	0.31 *
Political identity: Ideological	-0.20 *	-0.20 *	-0.26 ·
Ideological position: Left v. Centre		0.02	0.06
Ideological position: Right v. Centre		-0.27 *	-0.58 **
Pol. id.: Ideological × Id. pos.: Left			-0.04
Pol. id.: Ideological × Id. pos.: Right			0.44 ·
Reduction in Residual Sum of Squares		6.19 · (df=2; 764)	5.70 · (df=2; 762)

Notes: Significance codes: \*\*\* $p < 0.001$  < \*\* $p < 0.010$  < \* $p < 0.050$  < · $p < 0.100$  ;  
Number of observations: 802 ; Adjusted  $R^2 = 0.43$  ; Residual standard error is 1.03 ;  
27 country fixed effects are included in all models.

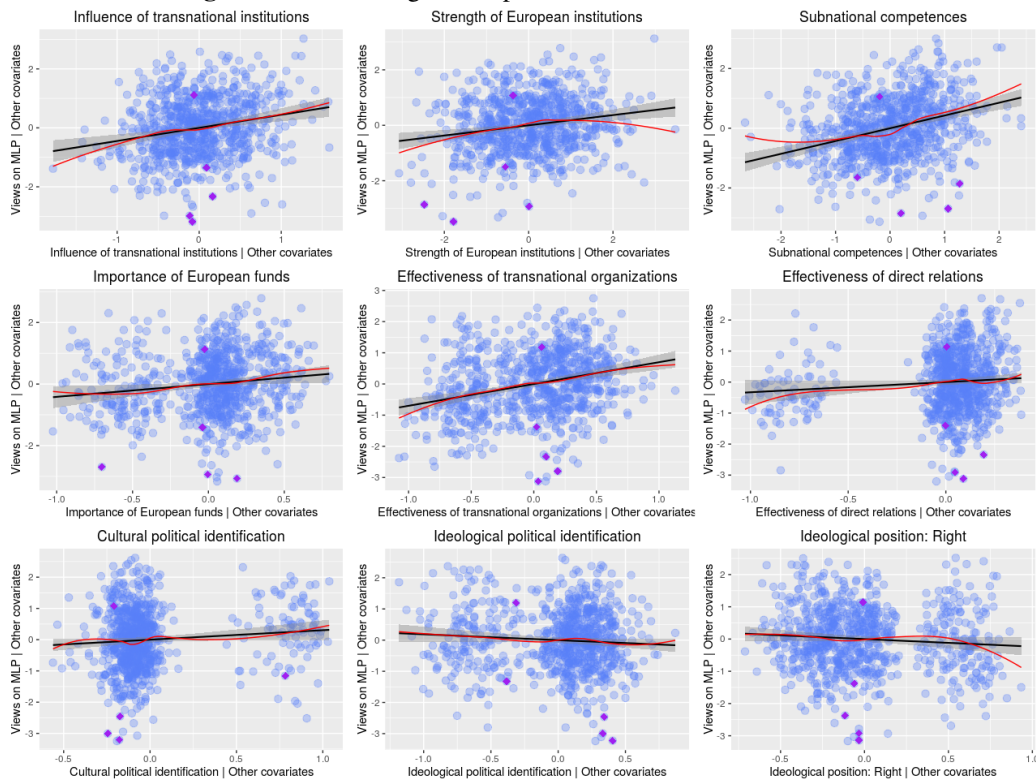
### 5.1.2 Regression diagnostics

A violation of the basic assumptions of OLS regression would damage the validity of the model. For this reason, the results of several diagnostic tests are considered to decide whether a model respecification is necessary. More precisely, the existence of influential observations, the quality of the linear fit, and the normality of the distribution of residuals are discussed below in this respect.

First, the overall influence of individual observations is measured through Cook's distance (Cook, 1977). In order to further investigate the causes of influence, the significance of outliers, hence the magnitude of their residuals, is tested through Bonferroni-corrected cut-off values, and the leverage of observations is measured in Hat values. Those which display unusually high Cook's distances are listed in the Table B.1 of Appendix B together with the corresponding residuals and Hat values. Examining the relationship among these three through the charts given in the Figure B.1 of Appendix B, three clear outliers and two influential observations combining moderate levels of residual and leverage represent disproportionate influence over the model fit, which can be improved by excluding them from the dataset.

Second, the multicollinearity of independent variables is tested through the measurement of variance inflation factors (VIF) (Marquardt, 1970), as presented in Appendix B.2<sup>2</sup>. The relatively higher VIF values are seen in the interaction term and its main effects, but the relationship among these is already evident. Additionally, the linearity of the association of each independent variable with the dependent variable is examined through partial regression plots and comparison against the lines of locally weighted scatterplot smoothing (LOWESS) (Cleveland, 1979). Figure 5.1 below presents the plots of nine main effects wherein the influential observations are marked with purple diamond-shaped dots.

**Figure 5.1:** Partial regression plots with influential observations



For the binary-coded variables, smoothed local regression lines mostly follow the linear fit despite slight oscillations in some cases. For the continuous variables, first, the influence of transnational institutions seems to have a more

<sup>2</sup>The VIF values are calculated on the same model designed with an intercept, since these values are calculated through  $R^2$  estimates which are not very meaningful in the absence of an intercept.

consistent linear fit as compared to the bivariate analysis which displayed diminishing effects. Nonetheless, the strength of European institutions and subnational competences display slightly convex-down and convex-up patterns respectively. Considering the position of influential observations, these divergences can be corrected by dropping them from the data. Excluding the points in the bottom-left of the plot on European institutions will flatten the locally sensitive line in the left section and reduce the overall slope of the linear line, thus match them on both ends. Similarly, excluding the points in the mid-bottom and the bottom-right sections of the plot on subnational competences will flatten the locally sensitive line in the middle, and increase the overall slope of the linear line. In this sense, dropping influential observations will also correct the problems related to the linearity of model fit.

Finally, the distribution of the residuals is summarized in Appendix B.3. First, it is visible that the overall distribution is left-skewed since outlying observations mostly have negative residuals; all significant outliers and four out of five influential observations conform to this pattern. Second, the variance of residuals is not completely independent from the values of the dependent variable, as it appears larger around medium to high values of the latter. Although the Breusch-Pagan test (Breusch and Pagan, 1979) is not significant, it returns a borderline value ( $p = 0.057$ ). Removing influential observations also solves these problems, as shown in Appendix B.3 where two figures compare the distributions with and without influential observations, which leads to a new result from the Breusch-Pagan test which is only significant at  $p = 0.144$ .

Therefore, the main correction to the specified model in the light of regression diagnostics will be dropping five influential observations. A more ideal strategy would be better fitting the model to the data instead of fitting the data to the model. Nonetheless, just like other variables available in the survey data do not improve the model fit statistics, they also cannot correct the diagnosed problems as successfully as dropping influential observations. Additionally, the fact that all these diagnosed issues can be corrected through this measure shows the extent of problems caused by such irregularities in the data. In this sense, the excluded data points will be assumed to result from possible measurement errors, the sample without them will be assumed more reliable, and Model III.3 will be still taken as the model representing the best statistical fit.

### 5.1.3 Country-level variation

Given the cross-national nature of the data and the sampling strategy which was developed through country-based clustering, the non-independence of the observations, that is another assumption of parametric statistical tests, cannot be assumed. An ideal strategy in this respect would be multilevel modelling, but the limitations of the data do not allow this method, for reasons discussed in Section 3.1.3. Since these standards cannot be met by the available survey data, the model is constructed with country fixed effects. Although unobserved country characteristics are controlled for in this method, fixed effects do not provide meaningful information about possible patterns in the country-level variation.

Meanwhile, paying close attention to country-level variation is imperative for theoretical reasons as well. Since the research question is motivated by the need to understand common institutional patterns across Europe, and since the argument is formulated in these terms, the variables that constitute the statistical model do not capture national factors. However, a decrease in the relative importance of national institutions is a quintessential aspect of multilevel politics, and persisting cross-national variation still shapes its development, as discussed in Section 1.2. For this reason, country-level variation must be examined before moving on to the interpretation of the posited variables, and the interpretation of the country fixed effects must be categorically distinct from and prior to other sets of variables.

In view of the methodological and theoretical centrality of the country level, the discussion below will both check the robustness of the statistical model, and reveal the relationship of national variation with common institutional patterns, by focusing on the portion of the variance due to national backgrounds and whether this variance is systematic. For this reason, the discussion below will investigate whether unobserved country characteristics explain a significant portion of the variance. For this purpose, 11 countries with reasonably large sample sizes are selected for detailed analyses. The first analysis will compare the results between models where country dummies are included and excluded. The second analysis will run the same model within each country to examine the changes in the coefficients. Model III.1 will be used here since sample sizes are small.

**Covariance of countries and main variables** Country fixed effects are already included in the models discussed above. An analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) will reveal whether the inclusion of these effects makes a large difference to the models. Table 5.3 below compares the variance explained by the countries only, by the posited variables only, and when the two are combined. The similarity of the last output to the original summary Model III indicates that the selected countries represent accurately the patterns observed in the entire dataset, with 649 out of 802 observations.

**Table 5.3:** Covariance between selected countries and the variables of Model III

	DV: Views on Multilevel Politics		
	Countries	Model III	Combined
<i>Reference country: Germany</i>			
Belgium	-0.16		-0.45 ·
France	0.45 ***		0.21
Ireland	0.19		-0.08
Italy	0.54 ***		0.00
Netherlands	-0.31		-0.17
Norway	-0.21		-0.28
Spain	0.44 ***		-0.36 *
Sweden	-0.34		-0.19
Switzerland	-0.68 ·		-0.05
United Kingdom	0.02		0.06
Influence of transnational institutions		0.38 ***	0.43 ***
Strength of European institutions		0.20 ***	0.21 ***
Competences of subnational authorities		0.47 ***	0.47 ***
Importance of European funds		0.47 **	0.41 **
Effectiveness of TNOs for external activity		0.68 ***	0.71 ***
Effectiveness of direct relations for external activity		0.35 *	0.30 ·
Political identity: European		-0.01	0.01
Political identity: Cultural		0.36 **	0.44 **
Political identity: Ideological		-0.22 *	-0.20 ·
Constant	2.60 ***	-1.65 ***	-1.77 ***
Observations	649	649	649
Adjusted $R^2$	0.03	0.41	0.42
Residual Std. Error	1.35	1.05	1.05
$F$ statistic	3.35 ***	51.94 ***	25.87 ***
	(df = 10; 638) (df = 9; 639) (df = 19; 629)		

Note: Significance codes: \*\*\* $p < 0.001$  < \*\* $p < 0.010$  < \* $p < 0.050$  < · $p < 0.100$

The first column in the table lists only the countries, where Germany is set as the reference country based on its median status according to its mean score of 2.60 on the dependent variable. Overall, this simple analysis of variance among countries is statistically significant. The second column lists the variables of

Model III. Finally, the third column lists both the countries and the covariates, which again returns a significant result of the analysis of covariance, but which makes a marginally insignificant contribution to Model III. Yet the borderline significance test ( $p = 0.055$ ) suggests that the variation among countries is still worth discussing.

The first remarkable result in the first column is that only the countries with higher mean scores on the dependent variable return significant coefficients, although there is a stronger negative result in the case of Switzerland. When the countries are combined with other covariates, only Spain remains significant, and this time with a negative coefficient. This would imply that after the variance explained by the covariates is accounted for, the positive contribution that Spain would otherwise make as compared to Germany is lost, and becomes even negative. This also applies to other countries, since the effect of France is cut by half, and the effect of Italy is totally lost. In these two initially significant cases, the inclusion of covariates pulls them closer to Germany partially or entirely. Overall, the same happens to Ireland, Netherlands, Sweden and especially Switzerland. While the UK and Norway remain more or less at the same position, the difference between Belgium and Germany becomes even more stark. Despite these differences, the overall interpretation that can be offered is that the inclusion of covariates reduces the effect of the variation among countries, and as such, the country-level variance is not a significant part of the explanatory framework.

It should be remarked that three cases which yield significant results in the first column share the feature of having a regionalized territorial administration, and they are the only regionalized countries in this list as distinct from federal and strictly unitary structures. This would suggest that the system of territorial organization might be relevant even if countries themselves do not make a significant effect. When these 11 countries are grouped into four categories—unitary (Ireland, Netherlands, Norway and Sweden), regionalized (France, Italy and Spain), federal (Germany, Belgium and Switzerland), and mixed or asymmetric (UK)—the same model of covariance does not return any near-significant results for them. In this sense, it is difficult to say that the variation among countries or groups of countries makes a remarkable difference to the model fit.

**Multivariate model within countries** The effect of unobserved country characteristics on the dependent variable may also be mediated by the independent variables. In order to check this possibility, the model is run within each country and the resulting coefficients are compared. It should be noted that very few variables return significant coefficients due to small sample sizes, even if a relatively short model is applied. For this reason, the comparisons will not take into account the significance levels and focus on detecting patterns irrespectively. Table 5.4 presents the outputs of all regressions, ordered from the lowest mean score on the dependent variable to the highest. When each independent variable is examined within this, it is difficult to detect any sustained pattern. Coefficients usually change from one country to another in an unpredictable direction and magnitude, which is illustrated in Figure 5.2. In this figure, each line representing the change in the coefficient of a variable across countries, the best pattern one can detect is the existence of a few lines which remain relatively flat, which is either analytically uninteresting or indicative of no country-level variation.

To simplify the examination, the countries can be divided into three groups with regard to the mean scores on the dependent variable: a low scoring category that includes Switzerland, Sweden, Netherlands, Norway and Belgium; a medium scoring category that includes Germany, the UK and Ireland; and a high scoring category that includes Spain, France and Italy. Although these categories do not display consistent patterns overall, some individual variables show a certain degree of similarity. For instance, similar levels in the medium scoring category with regard to subnational competences around 0.30 and ideological identification around -0.40 could be meaningful. Nevertheless, similarly consistent results cannot be found in other categories, and thus it is difficult to claim that the patterns of relationship among variables change in a certain way with increasing or decreasing values of the dependent variable.

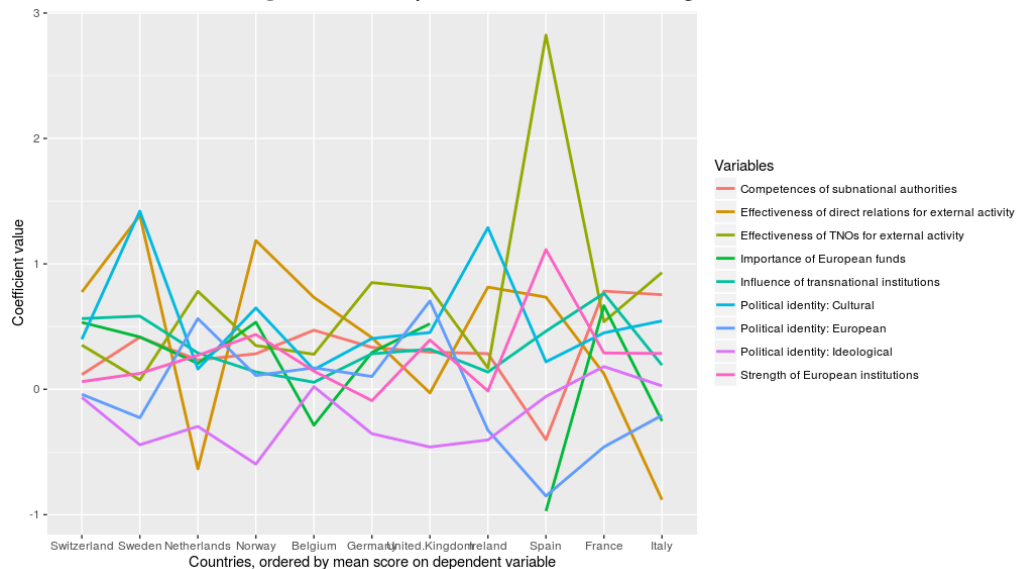
When the countries are grouped into the categories based on their systems of territorial organization, some interesting results can be found. Federal countries seem to display consistency in relatively larger coefficients on the effectiveness of direct relations, while unitary countries are consistent with regard to larger coefficients in subnational competences. The first finding conforms to existing studies which are discussed in Chapter 1 (e.g. Tatham, 2011) which argue that strong subnational units rely less on European institutions. Although this usually means



**Table 5.4:** Application of Model III in selected countries

	Dependent Variable: Views on Multilevel Politics			
	Switzerland mean: 1.92	Sweden mean: 2.26	Netherlands mean: 2.29	Norway mean: 2.39
Influence of transnational institutions	0.56 ***	0.58	0.29	0.14
Strength of European institutions	0.06	0.13	0.27	0.44 **
Competences of subnational authorities	0.12	0.42	0.23	0.28
Importance of European funds	0.53 **	0.42	0.21	0.54
Effectiveness of TNOs for external activity	0.35 *	0.07	0.78	0.35
Effectiveness of direct relations for external activity	0.78 ***	1.39	-0.63	1.19
Political identity: European	-0.04	-0.23	0.56	0.11
Political identity: Cultural	0.40	1.42	0.16	0.65
Political identity: Ideological	-0.06	-0.44	-0.30	-0.60
Constant	-1.20 *	-2.42	-0.04	-1.30
Observations	150	43	40	44
Adjusted $R^2$	0.39	0.11	0.30	0.40
Residual Std. Error	0.89	1.16	1.10	1.01
$F$ statistic	11.73 *** (df = 9; 140)	1.60 (df = 9; 33)	2.82 * (df = 9; 30)	4.21 ** (df = 9; 34)
	Dependent Variable: Views on Multilevel Politics			
	Belgium mean: 2.44	Germany mean: 2.60	UK mean: 2.62	Ireland mean: 2.79
Influence of transnational institutions	0.06	0.28	0.32	0.14
Strength of European institutions	0.15	-0.09	0.39 ***	-0.01
Competences of subnational authorities	0.47 *	0.33 *	0.30 *	0.28
Importance of European funds	-0.29	0.29	0.52	N/A
Effectiveness of TNOs for external activity	0.28	0.85 ***	0.80 **	0.17
Effectiveness of direct relations for external activity	0.73	0.41	-0.03	0.82
Political identity: European	0.17	0.10	0.70	-0.33
Political identity: Cultural	0.16	0.41	0.45	1.29
Political identity: Ideological	0.02	-0.35	-0.46	-0.40
Constant	-0.48	-0.03	-0.93	0.79
Observations	45	92	96	27
Adjusted $R^2$	0.11	0.27	0.44	0.00
Residual Std. Error	1.04	1.02	1.05	1.14
$F$ statistic	1.62 (df = 9; 35)	4.73 *** (df = 9; 82)	9.22 *** (df = 9; 86)	0.78 (df = 8; 18)
	Dependent Variable: Views on Multilevel Politics			
	Spain mean: 3.04	France mean: 3.05	Italy mean: 3.14	
Influence of transnational institutions	0.46	0.77 *	0.19	
Strength of European institutions	1.11 *	0.29	0.29	
Competences of subnational authorities	-0.40	0.78 ***	0.75	
Importance of European funds	-0.97	0.67	-0.25	
Effectiveness of TNOs for external activity	2.82	0.54	0.93	
Effectiveness of direct relations for external activity	0.73	0.12	-0.88	
Political identity: European	-0.85	-0.46	-0.21	
Political identity: Cultural	0.22	0.45	0.55	
Political identity: Ideological	-0.06	0.18	0.03	
Constant	-2.66	-4.06 **	-0.63	
Observations	25	40	47	
Adjusted $R^2$	0.29	0.55	0.46	
Residual Std. Error	1.47	0.96	0.88	
$F$ statistic	2.09 (df = 9; 15)	6.21 *** (df = 9; 30)	5.41 *** (df = 9; 37)	

Note: Significance codes: \*\*\* $p < 0.001$  < \*\* $p < 0.010$  < \* $p < 0.050$  <  $p < 0.100$

**Figure 5.2:** Unsystematic variation among countries

cooperation with national governments, strong domestic competences and financial resources are seen as necessary for being able to conduct foreign activities (Blatter et al., 2008, 2010), hence direct relations are a more feasible option for subnational actors from federal states. The second finding can be seen as the counterpart of this pattern, since acquiring stronger competences is a prerequisite for successful engagement in multilevel politics for those who are not yet powerful enough.

Another relevant distinction can be made between the member states of the EU and the non-members. A weaker association of European institutions and multilevel politics could be expected, but Switzerland and Norway constitute contrasting cases in this respect. Additionally, the importance of European funds has large and positive coefficients in both, suggesting that valuing the supranational aspect of multilevel politics is not exclusive to the members of the EU. Furthermore, both countries are in the group with relatively low mean scores on the dependent variable, but they cannot be distinguished from Sweden and Netherlands which are at the same level.

To conclude, there are no overarching country-level patterns that explain the views on multilevel politics, either through direct effects or the indirect mediation of other variables. The only exception to the absence of a systematic relationship is the reflection of federal-unitary difference over the views on subnational com-

petences and the feasibility of direct relations. Apart from this, country effects are relatively minor and unsystematic. Thereby, country fixed effects as used in the model specification here should be sufficient to account for the unobserved characteristics of national contexts and to provide reliable estimates for other variables in the model.

### 5.1.4 Readjusted model

To summarize, first, Model III.3 which includes all hypothesized variables as well as political self-positioning is selected as representing the best fit; second, dropping a few unusually influential observations which also contribute to the problems of slight non-linearity and heteroskedasticity improves the model fit; and third, although no overarching systematic pattern is found in the country-level variation, the inclusion of country dummies or fixed effects are still useful to account for the unobserved characteristics of national contexts and possible non-independence of observations coming from the same context. Taking stock of these findings, Table 5.5 presents the regression output of Model III.3 on the dataset without influential observations, and lists the country fixed effects which serve as the intercepts of the country-specific regression lines.

**Table 5.5:** Readjusted Model III.3 and country fixed effects

	DV: Views on MLP	Country fixed effects	
Influence of transnational institutions	0.42 ***	Austria	-0.99
Strength of European institutions	0.13 ***	Belgium	-1.91
Competences of subnational authorities	0.48 ***	Croatia	-1.49
Importance of European funds	0.33 **	Czech Rep.	-2.12
Effectiveness of TNOs for external activity	0.71 ***	Denmark	-1.74
Effectiveness of direct relations for external activity	0.40 *	Estonia	-1.63
Political identity: European	0.07	Finland	-2.76
Political identity: Cultural	0.29 *	France	-1.36
Political identity: Ideological	-0.25 .	Germany	-1.58
Ideological position: Left v. Centre	0.03	Greece	-1.78
Ideological position: Right v. Centre	-0.60 **	Iceland	-1.73
Pol. id.: Ideological $\times$ Id. pos.: Left	0.11	Ireland	-1.57
Pol. id.: Ideological $\times$ Id. pos.: Right	0.44 .	Italy	-1.45
		Lithuania	-2.55
Observations	797		
Adjusted $R^2$	0.48		
$F$ statistic	193.3 ***		
	(df=40; 757)		
Residual standard error	0.96		

Note: Significance codes: \*\*\* $p < 0.001$  < \*\* $p < 0.010$  < \* $p < 0.050$  <  $p < 0.100$

The overall improvement that the readjustment makes, as compared to the same model summarized in Table 5.2, is seen in the goodness of fit statistics:  $R^2$  has been increased from 0.43 to 0.48 and residual standard error is reduced from 1.03 to 0.96. In addition, several changes in coefficients also testify to the disproportionate influence that a small number of observations exerted. The coefficient for the strength of European institutions is reduced from 0.19 to 0.13, and that of subnational competences is increased from 0.43 to 0.48, conforming to the expectations derived from the investigation of the location of influential observations. Similar changes can also be seen in the importance of European funds and the effectiveness of direct relations, for the same reasons. Finally, another change that is not visible in the table, is a slight improvement in the significance level of the interaction term between ideological political identification and right-wing self-positioning, from 0.081 to 0.062. Additionally the main effect of ideological political identification is significant at  $p = 0.051$ . Given that the terms related to political ideology display borderline significance tests, they will be taken as statistically significant in further interpretations.

Therefore, in order to formulate the equation which estimates the views on multilevel politics, let the significant variables be denoted by the following:

- MLP** views on multilevel politics
- TNI** influence of transnational institutions
- SEI** strength of European institutions
- CSA** competences of subnational authorities
- IEF** importance of European funds
- ETO** effectiveness of transnational organizations
- EDR** effectiveness of direct relations
- CPI** political identification as cultural
- IPI** political identification as ideological
- IPR** ideological position in right

Then the linear equation will be expressed by the following:

$$\begin{aligned}
 MLP_{ic} = & \kappa_c + 0.42 \cdot TNI_{ic} + 0.13 \cdot SEI_{ic} + 0.48 \cdot CSA_{ic} \\
 & + 0.33 \cdot IEF_{ic} + 0.71 \cdot ETO_{ic} + 0.40 \cdot EDR_{ic} + 0.29 \cdot CPI_{ic} \\
 & - 0.25 \cdot IPI_{ic} - 0.60 \cdot IPR_{ic} + 0.44 \cdot IPI_{ic} \cdot IPR_{ic} + \varepsilon_{ic}
 \end{aligned}$$

where  $\kappa_c$  denotes the country-specific constants which are listed in Table 5.5, and  $\varepsilon_{ic}$  denotes the general error term. Although this equation is supposed to provide methodologically valid estimations thanks to the procedures described above, what is more interesting for the present study is its theoretical implications. Given that the measurements used in this model draw on constructs which are operationalized for the purposes of this study, such implications will be discussed below in view of their meaning for the hypothesized association between variables.

## 5.2 Interpretation of the findings

The primary finding of the multivariate model building is that the broad argument of this thesis is confirmed by the survey data. Since it has been shown by model comparison that Model III, which involves all posited variables, provides the best statistical fit to the data, the views on multilevel politics are best explained when the influence of transnational institutions, power distribution across levels of governance, material benefits and effectiveness, and political identification are all taken into account. In other words, the general explanation derived from an eclectic new-institutionalist theory, regarding the institutional influence on actors and actor expectations from institutions, is empirically confirmed. Nonetheless, it cannot be sustained that the data fully supports the argument given that significance levels vary and some covariates are negatively associated with the dependent variable. Moreover, different magnitudes of the coefficients provide additional information on the relative weight of posited variables. In this sense, following subsections will evaluate the hypothesized relationships in the light of statistical findings.

### 5.2.1 Influence of transnational institutions

The basic idea of the influence of transnational institutions is derived from the fundamental claim of new institutionalism, namely that institutions matter. In fact, all other covariates included in the model are also derived from new-institutionalist accounts which try to explain why institutions matter. Operationalized in a generic way by focusing on the links between the individual and the institution, this vari-

able measures a freestanding influence irrespectively of specific functions that institutions are expected to deliver. In theoretical terms, it constitutes the core aspect of the argument, which distinctively captures institutional effects. In methodological terms, its coefficient signifies such effects when all other institutionally relevant variables are controlled for.

In the linear model, one unit change in the influence of transnational institutions leads to 0.42 unit change in the views on multilevel politics. When the ranges of the variables are taken into account (the influence of transnational influence is measured on a range of 2.78 in [1.61, 4.39] and the views on multilevel politics is measured on a range of 4.96 in [0.04, 5.00]), the effect of one unit change in the independent variable corresponds approximately to 8.5% of the total range of the dependent variable. The effect of the difference between the maximum and the minimum scores would be 1.17 units which correspond to the 23.6% of the total range. In other words, the difference between individuals who are the least and the most influenced subnational actors would account for one quarter of fully favourable views on multilevel politics. Having thus established the significance of this variable, the first hypothesis can be confirmed:

**H1:** Subnational actors who have a stronger relationship with transnational institutions will also have stronger preferences for a transformation towards multilevel politics in general.

In order to specify the meaning of the quantitative results, the range of the influence of transnational institutions can be roughly divided into three categories. The first one third of the values come from subnational actors who are not members of any transnational institution. If their subnational unit is represented in any such institution, and if they are knowledgeable and motivated about them, their views on multilevel politics become more favourable. The mid-section corresponds to the transition from non-membership to membership, which makes the same effect. The last one third of the values come from the members of a transnational institution, with regard to their experience in terms of timing, duration, professional satisfaction and personal importance. In this sense, the 23.6% difference between the minimum and the maximum corresponds to the difference between a subnational actor whose authority is not represented in any transnational institution, whose knowledge of such institutions is very limited and who is

not motivated to work in any of them, and another actor who has been working in a transnational institution for a long time, who is professionally satisfied with this experience and who attaches great personal importance to this membership.

In view of these dimensions which are taken to represent the links between individuals and institutions, which do not necessarily rely on other institutionally relevant factors, it can be concluded that institutions shape the attitudes of actors simply by virtue of their existence towards more favourable views on multilevel politics. Meanwhile, more specific expectations from the institutions determine the views on multilevel politics alongside such a freestanding effect, as discussed in the sections below.

### **5.2.2 Distribution of competences**

The first set of variables which measure the expectations of actors from transnational institutions is about the distribution of power. While a historical institutionalist theoretical background offers the aspect of power distribution as an explanation of how institutions sustain themselves by creating compliance on the part of actors, this has been adapted to the purposes of the present study by shifting the focus onto the distribution of competences across levels of governance. In other words, instead of attempting to measure whether an actor is being empowered by certain institutions, the survey aimed to measure the views on the empowerment of large groups of actors working in different levels of governance. Multilevel politics can rise only if subnational and supranational levels of government become relatively more important spheres of political action. In this sense, favourable views on multilevel politics can be expected from those who also hold favourable views on the necessary power distribution. The findings from the survey data indeed confirm this posited relationship.

On the supranational side, one unit change in the variable of the views on stronger European institutions yields 0.13 unit change in the views on multilevel politics, corresponding to 2.6% of its total variation. Considering the full range of this independent variable, that is 4.80 in [0.20, 5.00], the difference between subnational actors who hold minimally and maximally favourable views on the strength of European institutions corresponds to 0.62 units of the dependent variable or 12.5% of its total range. Although these figures suggest a relatively low

effect, in the light of the statistical significance of the variable, the second hypothesis can be confirmed:

**H2:** Subnational actors who favour more power to be concentrated at the European level will have stronger preferences for a transformation towards multilevel politics.

On the subnational side, one unit change in the variable on the views on stronger subnational authorities yields 0.48 unit change in the views on multilevel politics, corresponding to 9.7% of its total variation. Considering the full range of this independent variable, that is 4.00 in [1.00, 5.00], the difference between subnational actors who hold minimally and maximally favourable views on subnational competences corresponds to 1.92 units of the dependent variable or 38.7% of its total range. On top of its statistical significance, given that this variable has a potential effect that can change the dependent variable by one third of its total range, the third hypothesis is also confirmed:

**H3:** Subnational actors who favour more decentralized domestic structures will have stronger preferences for a transformation towards multilevel politics.

The meaning of the quantitative results can be clarified by looking at the components of the variables. As discussed in the previous chapter, these two variables are measured along the same dimensions, but responses vary in terms of how these dimensions are ordered. Most visibly, foreign policy is at the top for European institutions and at the bottom for subnational authorities, and vice versa for social policy, while economic policy seems to be relatively prioritized for both. The common ground which might lay the basis of multilevel politics is the inclusion of all levels in deciding economic policies. To reiterate what has been argued by the existing works on bypassing the state, as discussed in Chapter 1, financial autonomy and the availability of resources are not only political goals in their own right, but also a prerequisite for effective multilevel political engagement. What can be deduced from the current findings, with regard to both directions of power redistribution, is that the expectations of subnational actors regarding better involvement in economic decision making occupy a considerable place in their conception of multilevel politics.



The primary task attributed to European institutions in terms of foreign policy concerns the relations with actors outside Europe, hence this is quite unrelated to multilevel politics within Europe. Meanwhile, the top priority for the subnational level, namely social policy, is concerned with providing services to citizens. In the end, what determines the higher values of each variable, hence what dominates the relationship with favourable views on multilevel politics, is outward-looking towards the world at large and inward-looking towards the citizens. In that sense, the two aspects of power redistribution are not simply a restatement of the definition of multilevel politics. Instead, the highest values in each come from the components which are not directly linked to a transformation towards European multilevel politics. Therefore, the power-distributive effects of institutions are associated with the views on multilevel politics even when the levels of governance are considered irrespectively of their constitutive role in a multilevel political system. Meanwhile, the main link between the two seems to lie in the centrality of economic power which necessitates increased cooperation among all levels of governance.

Yet the difference in the magnitude of coefficients indicates an asymmetry in the relevance of each level. The downward transfer of competences displays a much stronger relationship than the upward transfer, suggesting that decentralization rather than European integration can be seen as a more urgent aspect of the phenomenon. Thus, this precedence of decentralization can be interpreted as both a prerequisite and the objective of multilevel politics at the same time. In other words, even if the consolidation of multilevel politics could be seen as a process by which subnational authorities are strengthened, in fact stronger subnational authorities are necessary for this very consolidation to happen in the first place.

In sum, two interrelated conclusions can be drawn from these results. First, the views on the redistribution of competences across levels explain the views on multilevel politics, not simply because the two can be taken to mean the same thing, but also because of the intrinsic importance attached to stronger institutions at supranational and subnational levels. Second, the higher significance of the subnational level can be interpreted in terms of its consideration as a more imminent political project, either as a prerequisite or the objective of multilevel politics.

### 5.2.3 Material benefits and effectiveness

The second set of institutionally relevant factors pertains to the material benefits of institutionalized politics, as derived from the rational choice institutionalism. Such benefits are defined in both a narrow and a broad sense; on the one hand, they correspond to the incentives for actively taking part in institutional mechanisms of multilevel politics, and, on the other hand, the increased efficiency of institutionalized political activity. The first type is operationalized with the importance attached to European funds, and the second with the perceived effectiveness of formal and informal institutions for external activity.

European funds constitute the most prominent direct incentive for active involvement in European politics. The corresponding variable in the model did not measure whether the respondent actually benefits from these funds, but instead focused on the attitudes towards them. Through this attitudinal measurement and its relation to the dependent variable, the coefficient of the importance attached to European funds is taken to reflect the motivation of an actor to engage in multilevel political activities in order to derive such direct material benefits. According to the results obtained from the multivariate model, such a motivation indeed exists. An actor who thinks European funds are important for subnational units, as compared to another who does not, can be expected to display a higher score by 0.33 units on the dependent variable, corresponding approximately to 6.7% of the total range of the latter. Thereby, the fourth hypothesis is confirmed by the data:

**H4:** Actors who consider European funds as important for subnational politics will have stronger preferences for a transformation towards multilevel politics.

However, given that the respondents overwhelmingly selected the positive answers, it would be more appropriate to reverse the formulation of the hypothesis. Accordingly, the actors who constitute a minority in thinking that European funds are not so important for subnational units have weaker preferences for multilevel politics.

Additionally, in view of the material benefits of institutions as higher efficiency, both formal and informal channels are considered. The formal aspect is measured through whether actors think that transnational organizations are effective, and the informal aspect through whether they think that direct relations are

effective. The emphasis being on effectiveness, both variables return positive coefficients, but the possibility of more systematic relations that would be provided by formal organizations appears to be more strongly associated with favourable views on multilevel politics. More precisely, an actor who thinks that transnational organizations constitute an effective channel of external political activity, as compared to another who does not, can be expected to display a higher score by 0.71 units on the dependent variable corresponding to 14.3% of its total range. In contrast, an actor who thinks that direct relations constitute an effective alternative, as compared to another who does not, can be expected to display a higher score by 0.40 units on the dependent variable, corresponding to 8.1% of the total range. Thereby, the fifth hypothesis that these two variables represent is confirmed:

**H5:** Subnational actors who prefer institutionalized transnational activity for reasons of efficiency will have stronger preferences for a transformation towards multilevel politics.

However, a reverse formulation would also be appropriate for the indirect channels, since 92% of respondents found direct relations effective. Thus, a minority of subnational actors who think that even direct relations cannot be an effective way of conducting external political activity have weaker preferences for multilevel politics.

Finally, the third alternative, the effectiveness of national channels is not found to be associated with the views on multilevel politics positively or negatively. The lack of significance in this variable can be explained by contrasting the possible reasons as to why it could have positive or negative effects. A positive relationship could be expected, first, because of the emphasis on effectiveness. Furthermore, as noted on several occasions, national channels can in fact be the best option for domestically strong subnational authorities. However, the use of national channels means that the gatekeeper position of national governments is reproduced, which is not compatible with a systemic transformation towards multilevel politics.

In sum, European funds constitute a relevant form of material benefit as a financial incentive, and the efficiency generated by transnational institutions explain favourable views on multilevel politics. Although both formal and informal channels are found positively related, hence an important part of the explanatory

model, more conventional channels are not part of the explanation even if they are assessed on the basis of their effectiveness.

#### 5.2.4 Political identification

The third set of institutionally relevant variables is related to political identification, derived from sociological accounts of new institutionalism. Three variables are designed to test hypothesized relationships which depart from conventional identifications dominated by the prevalence of national or domestic politics: identification as a European politician provides this contrast in view of supranational politics, identification as a politician representing a cultural or ethnic group provides this contrast in view of subnational distinctiveness, and identification as a politician committed to an ideology or political party provides this contrast since such a commitment can draw on cross-national affiliations. However, these variables display the least conformity with the hypothesized relationships.

To begin with European political identification, this was expected to be positively associated with the dependent variable since the latter measures the views on multilevel politics which is conceptualized as a European system. However, there is no sufficient evidence to support this explanation. It should be remarked that the bivariate relationship of European political identification with the dependent variable was higher than other forms of identification. In this sense, the failure to confirm the sixth hypothesis can be explained methodologically by the fact that its effects are absorbed by other independent variables in the multivariate model. For instance, the mean change in the views on the strength of European institutions is almost the same as the mean change in the dependent variable between those who identify themselves as a European politician and those who do not. Another possibility is indicated by the relatively high correlation between European and national forms of political identification. Accordingly, a more conceptual explanation can be advanced based on the finding that European political identification is not necessarily a radical departure from traditional politics.

Second, the finding for cultural political identification confirms the hypothesized relationship. Thus, an actor who identifies oneself as a politician representing a culturally distinct group, as compared to another who does not, can be expected to display a higher score by 0.29 units on the dependent variable, corre-

sponding to 5.8% of its total range. In view of this significant result, the seventh hypothesis will be confirmed:

**H7:** Subnational actors who identify themselves as culturally distinctive from their national political establishment will have stronger preferences for a transformation towards multilevel politics.

The difference between cultural and European identifications indicates a parallel pattern to the difference between the views on European and subnational competences. In general, it can be deduced that subnational factors constitute stronger motives for multilevel politics as compared to supranational factors. Similarly to the interpretations on power distribution, subnational distinctiveness could be a more imminent ground of action since regionalist political agendas include demands for autonomy or independence, while Europeanist political agendas do not have such strong emotional content.

Third, the variable of ideological political identification contradicts the hypothesized relationship by returning a negative coefficient. At a general level, this is a confirmation of the sociological account, since a type of identification is found statistically significant. But the negative sign of the coefficient must be taken seriously. In this respect, it is wrong to associate party-political or ideological identification with multilevel politics on the basis of not being confined to the domestic sphere of politics. An alternative explanation would be based on understanding ideological identification as a representation of more traditional forms of politics, hence incompatible with multilevel politics. In the end, if an explicit commitment to established ideologies or party programmes is incompatible with the basic properties of multilevel politics, this must be due to a mismatch between the two.

The specificities of the findings should be considered in conjunction with the closely related variable on self-positioning in political spectrum. Given that an interaction term is already included in the model, the magnitudes of the coefficients are meaningful only when they are interpreted together. As both variables are binary-coded, there are four possible combinations:

- if the actors neither identify themselves in ideological terms nor position themselves in the right wing, the total predicted effect is 0.00

- if the actors identify themselves in ideological terms, but do not position themselves in the right wing, the total predicted effect is -0.25
- if the actors do not identify themselves in ideological terms, but position themselves in the right wing, the total predicted effect is -0.60
- if the actors both identify themselves in ideological terms, and position themselves in the right wing, the total predicted effect is -0.41

The first implication is that self-positioning in the right wing of the political spectrum has a larger negative effect than political identification with an ideology or political party. Second, ideological political identification does not magnify the negative effect of self-positioning in the right wing, but on the contrary diminishes this effect. Hence, an altered version of the eighth hypothesis should be accepted:

**H8-altered:** Subnational actors who identify themselves as committed to their ideological and party-political positions, irrespectively of the particular position on the left-right spectrum, will have *weaker* preferences for a transformation towards multilevel politics.

Finally, the negative coefficient of the ideological position provides an additional finding which was not hypothesized from the new-institutionalist framework. The explanation of this can be based on the intuitive incompatibility of nationalist and Eurosceptic worldviews with multilevel politics. It should be remarked that the number of respondents who positioned themselves on the left were considerably higher than those who marked right-wing positions. In this sense, it can be assumed that the centre also represents more moderate right-wing views, while the right mostly represents relatively radical views such as nationalism and Euroscepticism.

In sum, unlike other sets of variables which have been discussed in previous subsections, the sociological hypotheses are not consistently confirmed by the data. The only confirmed hypothesis is on subnational distinctiveness through cultural identification, but this has a relatively small coefficient. While no sufficient evidence was found for the relevance European political identification, ideological political identification proved to be a negatively related variable. Additionally, right-wing political views are found to be negatively associated with the dependent variable. Despite mixed evidence regarding the hypotheses, the sociological

account is still an important part of the broader argument, since the unexpected and even the non-confirmatory findings lead to interesting interpretations.

### **5.3 General evaluation of the model**

To recapitulate, the chapter has offered the main quantitative analysis of the survey data by constructing a multivariate model and interpreting the results therein. The specification of an OLS model with country fixed effects, which includes all posited sets of variables, testifies to the broad accuracy of the main argument and the eclectic new-institutionalist approach of the thesis. Following the investigation of regression diagnostics and country-level variation, Model III.3 being fitted to the sample of 792 respondents provides a sound basis for testing the hypotheses. In return, the majority of the hypothesized associations with the dependent variable are confirmed by the survey data according to the results of the multivariate model. The only exceptions include insufficient and contradictory evidence found for the sociological hypotheses.

A variety of conclusions are drawn from these findings. First, transnational institutions have a considerable influence over the actors, either directly or indirectly, in a way that leads to more favourable views on multilevel politics. Additionally, although cross-national variation is revealed to be largely unsystematic, it is methodologically and theoretically important to observe this result in a model where fixed country effects are also controlled for. Second, the subnational aspect of power redistribution has a greater leverage than the supranational aspect, which can be explained by the imminence of subnational competences as a prerequisite of multilevel political activity for many actors. Third, a similar conclusion can be seen in political identification, as subnational distinctiveness has a more visible effect on the views on multilevel politics than European political identification. Fourth, the effectiveness of formal institutional channels have a stronger effect on the views on multilevel politics than informal channels. Fifth, established ideologies are not adapted to a vision which can endorse the basic properties of multilevel politics.

While these findings lead to such analytically interesting conclusions, they will also inform the next stage of analysis at the institutional level. Above all, the higher relevance of formal institutions justify the focus of the case study on

European organizations. As for the specific dimensions to be discussed, when institutional characteristics are assessed with regard to power distribution, special attention will be paid to the empowerment of subnational authorities. Furthermore, the effectiveness of formal organizations is evidently an important quality that institutions must meet. Finally, among sociological effects of institutions, international socialization and the legitimation of European identity are not as important as the generation of norms which can compensate for the incompatibility with the established ideologies and which can counteract right-wing antagonism to multilevel politics.



## **Chapter 6**

# **Institutional forms of multilevel politics: a comparative case study**

Having concluded the individual-level analyses by confirming the majority of hypothesized associations with favourable views towards multilevel politics, this chapter will shift the focus to institutional-level variation between two major cases which institutionalize multilevel politics. The main purpose here is to advance a comparative case study of the Committee of the Regions (CoR or Committee) and the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities (CLRAE or Congress), categorized as belonging to the same class of institutions and which are similar but different in a way that can lead to analytically useful conclusions. The preliminary comparisons of the two organizations, as discussed in Chapter 1 and 2, suggest that both organizations share the fundamental characteristic of providing subnational actors with direct representation at the supranational level—a distinctive feature of innovative institutional development.

This categorization also lies at the root of several commonalities which allows for appropriate comparison. Both the CoR and CLRAE are consultative bodies within two major European political organizations, established approximately at the same time in the early 1990s. Their similarities also include, to name a few features, a parliament-like functioning with regular plenary sessions which discuss drafts prepared by task-specific committees or commissions, the elaboration of political positions along two lines of national delegations and political party groups, and the selection of members according to national quotas with due re-

spect to the geographical and political distributions in each country. Nonetheless, not only do they differ in degree along these dimensions, but they may also display categorically different attributes in other aspects which require an in-depth study of their respective institutional architectures. For this reason, the comparative perspective adopted here will not take these similarities as constant, but approach the cases with an exploratory agenda, while these features are unpacked throughout the comparative analyses.

As discussed in Chapter 3, the methodological rationale behind this comparative case study is to complement the individual-level analysis with the institutional level, in order to observe two kinds of variation, hence to approach the question of institutional effects from two angles. This complementarity means that the comparative case study is distinct from the quantitative analyses in several respects, but parallel in others. It is distinct in that it does not seek to retest the same specific hypotheses, as the focus is rather on institutional features. For example, the categories used in the content analysis and the questions asked in semi-structured interviews do not repeat the questionnaire of the survey. Yet it is parallel to the quantitative part of this thesis, since the overarching focus on institutional effects as well as the new-institutionalist framework is retained. Accordingly, institutional features are taken as the sources of influence, and their examination follows the same structure of the eclectic theoretical framework: the potential to shape members' views towards multilevel politics, the redistribution of political competences, the likely impacts of intra-institutional mechanisms, and the generation of relevant norms and values.

To begin with a re-examination of the survey data, the first section will show that there is no satisfactory evidence to claim any significant difference between CoR and CLRAE in quantitative terms. In order to account for this similarity, or the lack of a significant difference, overarching commonalities between the two cases will be highlighted in the second section. However, it should be acknowledged that the quantification may fail to capture important details about the cases, and CoR and CLRAE might have some comparative advantages which contribute to their institutional effects separately. In this sense, the following sections will scrutinize such advantages in institutionalist terms of the distribution of competences between levels of decision making, institutional effectiveness, and the capacity to generate and diffuse relevant political norms.

It will be concluded that the constitution of supranational fora for subnational actors emerges as a distinctive commonality: that the competence-level comparative advantage of the CoR is on the side of the European level and an ideal form of multilevel governance, while the advantage of the CLRAE leans towards the subnational level and its more immediate empowerment; and that the CoR displays more effective institutional mechanisms, while the CLRAE is rather a place of political and normative debate. In this respect, the CoR and the CLRAE display differences along the main dimensions of institutionalization, in contrast to the individual-level observation that their respective members do not differ in the variables that correspond to the same dimensions. Thus, institutional aspects such as the distribution of competences, effectiveness, material incentives, and the generation of relevant norms and values do not constitute specific forms of influence over actors that change their attitudes, but these can rather be understood as qualities that the actors expect and separate institutions deliver.

## 6.1 Effects of institutional membership

In the analyses of survey data so far, the influence of transnational institutions is included as a continuous variable, the measurement of which is primarily sensitive to membership in an organization, but it also takes into account the variation in various institutional factors for members and non-members separately. The focus of this chapter is on the members of formal institutions, hence it is appropriate to begin with a re-examination of the survey data by substituting membership for institutional influence. The aim is, thereby, both to explore relevant characteristics of membership in formal institutions, and to derive guidelines to inform following qualitative analyses.

Table 6.1 presents this substitution in Model III.3 with dichotomous and categorical variables in turn. The dichotomous variable compares respondents who declared membership in any international or transnational organization with those who did not (Model B), while the categorical variable with three dummies compares separately the members of CLRAE, CoR and another organization with those who did not declare membership in any organization (Model C). All three models display very close goodness of fit statistics; in that sense, the use of non-continuous measurements does not radically reduce the explanatory power of the

models. However, it should be noted that the coefficient of the substituted variable has the same value across models A and B, suggesting that approximately 0.40 unit change in the views on multilevel politics can be accounted for by one unit of the continuous variable from a range of [1.61, 4.39] encompassing members and non-members, or the entire range of the dichotomous variable which only distinguishes members from non-members.

**Table 6.1:** Model III.3 with different measurements of institutional influence

	DV: Views on Multilevel Politics		
	Model A	Model B	Model C
Influence of transnational institutions	0.42 ***		
Membership in a transnational organization		0.39 ***	
Membership in CLRAE			0.58 ***
Membership in CoR			0.26 .
Membership in another organization			0.38 **
Strength of European institutions	0.13 ***	0.14 ***	0.14 ***
Competences of subnational authorities	0.48 ***	0.48 ***	0.48 ***
Importance of European funds	0.33 **	0.38 **	0.38 **
Effectiveness of TNOs for external activity	0.71 ***	0.77 ***	0.77 ***
Effectiveness of direct relations for external activity	0.40 **	0.43 **	0.45 **
Political identity: European	0.07	0.11	0.10
Political identity: Cultural	0.29 *	0.28 *	0.29 *
Political identity: Ideological	-0.25 .	-0.28 *	-0.28 *
Ideological position: Left v. Centre	0.03	0.01	0.00
Ideological position: Right v. Centre	-0.60 **	-0.65 **	-0.65 **
Pol. id.: Ideological $\times$ Id. pos.: Left	0.11	0.10	0.12
Pol. id.: Ideological $\times$ Id. pos.: Right	0.44 .	0.48 *	0.48 *
Observations	797	797	797
Adjusted $R^2$	0.48	0.46	0.46
Residual Std. Error	0.96	0.97	0.97
$F$ statistic	193.30 *** (df=40; 757)	189.00 *** (df=40; 757)	180.20 *** (df=42; 755)

Note: Significance codes: \*\*\* $p < 0.001 < **p < 0.010 < *p < 0.050 < .p < 0.100$

Model C unpacks this single dichotomy into three dummy dichotomies of membership, with almost identical results in all other covariates. One surprising result is that CoR appears as the membership category which is the least different from non-membership, so much so that its coefficient is marginally insignificant ( $p = 0.06$ ). However, this does not necessarily mean that CoR members on average have less favourable views on MLP, but it is possible that its coefficient is reduced more dramatically by the covariation with other factors in the model. To observe the raw difference, this result should be interpreted against the back-

ground of the differences in the score of the dependent variable among membership categories independent of other covariates. When the dependent variable is compared across membership categories only, it is predicted to be 2.63 for non-members of any organization, and between 3.40 and 3.43 for the members of the three categories of organizations<sup>1</sup>. In other words, all three membership categories are almost equally different from non-membership. Nonetheless, this difference is more strongly accounted for by other covariates in the case of the CoR, whilst other membership categories seem to have a rather freestanding influence on actors. In this sense, as a guiding intuition for upcoming comparative analyses, the CLRAE can be expected to display institutional features which are less likely to be associated with those already included in statistical analyses.

To narrow down the scope, Table 6.2 summarizes the application of Model III.2 to the subset of data which consists of respondents who declared institutional membership<sup>2</sup>. The first thing to notice is the lack of significance in predictors which pertain to institutional influence. As noted in Chapter 4, the association between the continuous variable of institutional influence and the dependent variable is weaker at higher levels of the former, and this weak association seems to be reflected in Model A of Table 6.2. Therefore, the indicators which measure this range of the variable such as the timing and the duration of, the satisfaction with, and the importance attached to transnational experience do not significantly relate to the dependent variable according to the available data. Yet their relevance in the broader models can be explained by the significance of the institutional characteristics as the source of institutional influence, which will be discussed in the upcoming sections.

In Model B, there is no statistically significant difference between membership in another organization and membership of CoR or CLRAE, while the difference between the coefficients of CoR and CLRAE is also too small to be significant. This result, on the other hand, suggests that while membership in a transnational organization makes a noticeable difference in actors' views on multilevel politics,

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<sup>1</sup>These statistics are the approximate mean scores of the dependent variable in each category, but not the exact scores due to weighting, since the weights are based on the country distribution in the entire dataset irrespective of the country distribution within each category of institution. However, it can still be stated that the differences among these categories are negligible when not controlled for by other covariates.

<sup>2</sup>A smaller model is selected due to the smaller sample size, by dropping the interaction terms. In addition, country fixed effects are also dropped to retain higher degrees of freedom.

**Table 6.2:** Model III in the subset of members

	DV: Views on MLP	
	Model A	Model B
Influence of transnational institutions	0.44	
Membership in CoR v. another organization		-0.17
Membership in CLRAE v. another organization		-0.22
Strength of European institutions	0.27 ***	0.29 ***
Competences of subnational authorities	0.39 ***	0.36 ***
Importance of European funds	-0.34	-0.32
Effectiveness of TNOs for external activity	0.98 ***	0.99 ***
Effectiveness of direct relations for external activity	-1.05 *	-1.02 *
Political identity: European	0.23	0.26
Political identity: Cultural	0.23	0.30
Political identity: Ideological	-0.32 *	-0.36 *
Ideological position: Left v. Centre	-0.01	-0.07
Ideological position: Right v. Centre	-0.71 ***	-0.68 ***
Constant	0.16	2.02 **
Observations	203	203
Adjusted $R^2$	0.40	0.39
Residual Std. Error	0.84	0.84
F statistic	13.05 *** (df=11; 191)	11.98 *** (df=12; 190)

Note: Significance codes: \*\*\* $p < 0.001$  < \*\* $p < 0.010$  < \* $p < 0.050$

the type of institution is much less significant, at least for a quantified measurement of the dependent variable. Similarly to what has been said for the categorical predictor above, this can also be interpreted by isolating all other covariates. Even then, differences across categories are not statistically significant, resulting in estimates of 3.42 for ‘another organization’, 3.22 for CoR, and 3.12 for CLRAE<sup>3</sup>. The absence of significant quantitative variation will thus be one of the main issues to be addressed in qualitative analyses to follow, and for this reason, the observed differences will be interpreted in terms of comparative advantages.

Changes in other covariates as compared to the previous models, nevertheless, imply interesting patterns. On one hand, the strength of European institutions and the effectiveness of transnational organizations become stronger predictors of the dependent variable; on the other hand, the effectiveness of direct relations becomes a negatively associated predictor. Both changes can be explained by

<sup>3</sup>Similarly to the above note, these figures correspond to weighted means when weights are calculated according to the country distribution in the entire dataset, and differences from previous figures are due to the change in the dataset.

the fact that all respondents in this dataset are members of a formal transnational organization, and for this reason, they may have a higher level of confidence in formal institutions and lower level of confidence in relatively informal channels such as direct relations. On this basis, it can be supposed that their expectations from stronger and more effective supranational institutions replace freestanding institutional influence to predict the dependent variable. Hence particular attention should be paid to the strength and effectiveness of the studied organizations in qualitative analyses.

Finally, narrowing down the scope further so that it corresponds to the comparative case study, a similar analysis can be conducted on a subset consisting only of members of CoR and CLRAE. In this respect, Table 6.3 summarizes a model of selected variables<sup>4</sup> specific to these two organizations. Similar conclusions to those drawn from the previous model can be reconfirmed when other organizations apart from CoR and CLRAE are ignored. However, the coefficient for the strength of European institutions conforms more to the results from the entire dataset than those from the dataset of respondents with transnational experience. In this sense, the strength of supranational organization is not indispensable while promoting domestic empowerment of subnational authorities as an institutional feature can still be expected to have greater leverage. On the other hand, the absence of statistically significant differences between CoR and CLRAE can be extended to major independent variables, as seen in Table 6.4. Therefore, it is difficult to claim that different organizations generate different expectations on the part of their members, regarding the institutional functions relevant to multilevel politics.

Meanwhile, several other measurements which were included in the survey but which have not been discussed so far also fail to indicate any significant difference. These were organization-specific questions which rated the desired priorities such as economic development, the empowerment of subnational authorities, promoting local democracy and multilevel governance, the desired future status of the organization, and the significance of intra- or extra-institutional factors such as commissions/committees, national delegations, party groups and

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<sup>4</sup>With such a small sample size, in order to keep the number of variables as low as possible and the degrees of freedom as high as possible, the variables which are most likely to be significant are selected on the basis of previous models.

**Table 6.3:** Model of selected variables in the subset of CoR and CLRAE

	DV: Views on MLP
Membership in CLRAE v. CoR	-0.06
Strength of European institutions	0.19 *
Competences of subnational authorities	0.50 ***
Effectiveness of TNOs for external activity	0.70 **
Effectiveness of direct relations for external activity	-0.35
Political identity: Ideological	-0.01
Ideological position: Left v. Centre	0.09
Ideological position: Right v. Centre	-0.79 ***
Constant	1.00 ·
Observations	108
Adjusted $R^2$	0.40
Residual Std. Error	0.78
F statistic	9.82 *** (df=8; 99)

Note: Significance codes: \*\*\* $p < 0.001$  < \*\* $p < 0.010$  < \* $p < 0.050$  < · $p < 0.100$

**Table 6.4:** Comparison of the main variables between CoR and CLRAE

	CoR	CLRAE
Views on Multilevel politics	3.27	3.27
Strength of European institutions	3.15	3.25
Competences of subnational authorities	3.35	3.26
Importance of European funds	95%	92%
Effectiveness of TNOs for external activity	80%	80%
Effectiveness of direct relations for external activity	98%	93%
Political identity: European	57%	62%
Political identity: Cultural	19%	13%
Political identity: Ideological	63%	73%
Ideological position: Right	31%	22%

subnational interests, which were asked in the third section of the questionnaire (see Appendix A.3.2 for details). The overall similarity of the variables which are specifically operationalized for the comparison of the organizations suggests that their members have highly similar attitudes, not only towards multilevel politics and institutionally relevant aspects that have been discussed in the previous chapters, but also towards their organizations as such.

The lack of definitive evidence about institutional differences between CoR and CLRAE can be related to the limitations of either quantitative methods in general or the data at hand in particular. However, the inability to detect differences in quantitative terms does not necessarily prove that the two organizations are highly



similar. A more plausible conclusion is that the Committee and the Congress have comparative advantages, on top of overarching commonalities, which help them to display similar quantitative levels of influence over their members with regard to their views on multilevel politics. In addition, the interpretations that have been advanced in this section also offer guiding intuitions for the upcoming discussions: CLRAE is more likely to have a comparative advantage in terms of factors which are not captured by the individual-level variables since its influence is not reduced dramatically by the existence of these covariates; comparative advantages will not necessarily mean specific forms of institutional influence since the members of two organizations do not differ in the independent variables either; the strength and effectiveness of organizations, and the supranational level matter but these are not indispensable.

In the following sections, it will be shown that CoR benefits from the evident advantages of being placed within the EU, with regard to both the existence of a strong institution at the supranational level and the effectiveness of institutional processes. Yet in the light of the above-mentioned conclusions from the re-examined survey data, the distinctive features of CLRAE should not be underestimated: its emphasis on decentralization which has greater leverage for multilevel politics than supranational integration, and its normative capacity which was probably not captured by the individual-level analyses.

## **6.2 Supranational fora for subnational actors**

The overarching commonalities between CoR and CLRAE are not only the methodological bases of their comparability, but also the possible sources of the convergence in their effects as observed in the survey data. Such commonalities align closely with the reasons for their selection as the typical cases of the institutionalization of multilevel politics. Namely, they both embody the direct links between subnational and supranational levels, in the form of the representation of subnational political actors in European organizations, which is likely to result in shared institutional characteristics. The following subsections will present the internal structures of CoR and CLRAE in turn, in order to specify these characteristics

in further detail<sup>5</sup>. The third subsection will draw on the recurrent themes in the qualitative interviews to frame such characteristics in terms of the importance of the existence of supranational fora for subnational actors.

### **6.2.1 The structure of the Committee of the Regions**

The Committee of the Regions is an advisory body within the institutional architecture of the EU. It was established in 1994, following the Maastricht Treaty, to provide input from subnational interests to the legislation and policy at the EU level; although its name has an emphasis on regions, it represents both local and regional entities. Its role within this architecture was recognized and strengthened through successive treaties, especially the Treaty of Lisbon through which it was given the formal power to appeal to the European Court of Justice on issues related to subsidiarity. While this is not a power to make a real difference in the day-to-day business of the EU legislation, and does not change the status of the Committee as an advisory body, its symbolic and nominal significance should not be underestimated. In addition, as compared to the other advisory body of the EU, the European Economic and Social Committee, CoR is distinctive in having a parliament-like structure bringing together political actors from across Europe.

It is composed of 350 members from 28 countries; all members are democratically elected members of regional or local entities in their home countries, and their primary political mandate lies with their regions or localities, while they participate in the activities of CoR with six plenary session meetings and six commission meetings per year. Members are normally selected for five years, but they lose their CoR mandate if they lose their domestic mandate. Since it is practically impossible to represent all local and regional entities, members are decided on by national governments and approved by the Council of the EU. The selection process must satisfy the conditions of a democratic electoral mandate of members,

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<sup>5</sup>Some major characteristics of CoR and CLRAE are already discussed in previous chapters: Chapter 1 includes a review of the literature which contextualizes the two organisations within the institutional channels of multilevel politics, and Chapter 2 shows that they fit well into the proposed theoretical framework. While some repetition is inevitable, the aim here is to complement these—that is, to contribute to the literature and to provide empirical evidence to the theoretical arguments—with a systematic analysis and a complete picture. For this purpose, the descriptions provided in this section also utilizes primary sources in the form of official documentation of the CoR and CLRAE, in particular their websites and the documents published through these websites.

and fair representation of all political parties and all geographic parts of the country. Since participation in meetings in Brussels may not always be possible for all members, an equal number of alternate members are also selected to replace full members if necessary, and eventually to ensure the highest level of attendance in the meetings.

The ultimate product of the work of the Committee is the adoption of opinions and resolutions. Formal opinions are the input of CoR to European legislative proposals, while resolutions are texts adopted on topical political issues without necessarily relating to legislation. The Committee must be consulted for legislative proposals when the legislation is expected to have direct implications for local and regional authorities. The process of adopting an opinion begins with the appointment of a relevant CoR commission, and a rapporteur to prepare a draft opinion. After discussion, amendments and adoption in the commission, the opinion is submitted to the plenary assembly where further amendment proposals are discussed and the final text is adopted. An adopted opinion is sent to the EU institutions for consideration in the legislative process.

All this process works along three lines of organization. First, grouping of members into six commissions organizes a specialized division of labour. As the drafts submitted by commissions form the basis of the eventual opinion, commission members are selected to reflect the national and political composition of the Committee. A broad range of subjects is thus covered by them: the Commission for Citizenship, Governance, Institutional and External Affairs (CIVEX), the Commission for Territorial Cohesion Policy and EU Budget (COTER), the Commission for Economic Policy (ECON), the Commission for the Environment, Climate Change and Energy (ENVE), the Commission for Natural Resources (NAT), and the Commission for Social Policy, Education, Employment, Research and Culture (SEDEC). Second, members are organized into political groups, corresponding to five European party families: the European People's Party (EPP), the Party of European Socialists (PES), the Group of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE), the European Alliance Group (EA), and the European Conservatives and Reformists Group (ECR). These groups represent not only diverse ideological positions, but also different approaches to European integration and the role of European institutions. Political groups meet before plenary sessions to discuss possible common positions about draft opinions in accordance

with their general principles. Third, similarly, national delegations representing 28 member states meet before plenary sessions to reconsider draft opinions with respect to possible implications for their countries.

This structure is coordinated by the Bureau which meets eight times a year, six of which precede the plenary sessions. The Bureau consists of the president and the first vice-president of the CoR, leaders of political groups, and 56 other members, 28 of which act as vice-presidents representing every national delegation, with a mandate of two years and a half. In addition to coordinating the work of the commissions and the plenary sessions, the Bureau more broadly decides the political programme of the CoR and supervises its implementation. Alongside the Bureau, the secretariat with the secretary general and six directorates, consisting of civil servants, perform administrative tasks and ensure the day-to-day running of CoR.

Overall, although CoR is an advisory body of the EU, it has to deal with complex issues on several fronts, such as the representation of subnational units from all member states which have different systems of territorial administration, drafting opinions on a broad range of subjects which inform the EU legislation, and reaching decisions on proposals which may be relevant for different political positions and diverse national backgrounds. This complexity seems to be successfully institutionalized so far through commissions, political groups, national delegations, the Bureau and the secretariat-general.

### **6.2.2 The Structure of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe**

The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe, or the Congress of the Council of Europe was established in 1994 with a statutory resolution of the Committee of Ministers to make it a permanent part of the institutional architecture of the CoE. However, it is the product of a longer history of more than 50 years. The Conference of Local Authorities of Europe was established in 1957, eight years after CoE. It was expanded in 1975 to include regional authorities, and acquired a permanent status in 1979 with the name Standing Conference of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe. The most crucial point in its history is arguably the adoption of the European Charter of Local Self-Government in

1985, and its immediate opening to signature. As the Charter has become the international legal benchmark for local democracy in Europe, the Standing Conference eventually attained its current status to oversee its implementation. While the Congress has thus a mandate based on international law, its role is usually bound to make recommendations.

The CLRAE is composed of 324 members from 47 countries, representing over 200,000 authorities according to its self-depiction (CLRAE, 2016a). Their membership is dependent upon electoral mandate in their localities or regions. Their participation in CLRAE activities primarily takes place in two meetings each year. The selection of delegates by member states must ensure fair representation with respect to the landscape of local and regional politics, geographic distribution, and local-regional balance, as well as a 30% quota for women. Another 324 members are selected as substitutes to ensure that preventing conditions during meeting times do not reduce participation levels.

Having a special mission under the European Charter of Local Self-Government, CLRAE aims to draft new international treaties to promote local and regional democracy, which would then be effective to the extent that national governments adopt them. Drafting such treaties, however, is naturally part of a long-term political strategy and requires considerable effort spread over years. On a more regular basis, CLRAE adopts several types of texts which document monitoring missions and debates in its chambers and plenary assembly. Accordingly, it adopts reports on the state of local and regional democracy in member countries, in view of the implementation of the Charter. Its overseeing of local and regional democracy is also complemented by monitoring missions to observe local and regional elections. In addition to monitoring, members debate topical political subjects which relate to the role of subnational authorities and the importance of local and regional democracy. The different types of texts adopted by CLRAE include, first, drafts proposed by a rapporteur which are adopted as reports. Second, texts addressed to the Committee of Ministers for implementation by national governments are framed as recommendations. Third, texts addressed to the local and regional authorities are framed as resolutions. Finally, if the Committee of Ministers or the Parliamentary Assembly consults the Congress on a specific subject which is expected to have implications for subnational authori-

ties or which could be improved by their input, the resulting text is framed as an opinion.

The process of adopting a text begins by the preparation of a draft by a rapporteur, discussed in the first place in a relevant committee. Currently CLRAE has three committees, each committee representing the overall composition of the Congress members. The division of tasks among committees is established according to the nature of the work corresponding to the main missions of the Congress. The Monitoring Committee, or with its full name, The Committee on the Honouring of Obligations and Commitments by Member States of the European Charter of Local Self-Government is responsible for reporting on the above-mentioned monitoring missions. The responsibility of the Governance Committee covers other areas of the mandate of CLRAE, such as systems of governance, public finance, cooperation among subnational authorities or with other intergovernmental organizations, etc. Finally, the Current Affairs Committee focuses on major contemporary social and political issues which relate to the role of subnational authorities and the core values of CoE.

Another important line of organization is the separation of local and regional chambers. Although CLRAE consists of both local and regional representatives, and although the final decisions are taken in the plenary assembly which brings together both groups, the Chamber of Local Authorities and the Chamber of Regions also hold separate sessions to provide potentially distinct views which local and regional authorities may have. While this division is less meaningful for countries which do not have a federal or regionalized system of government, consistency across member states is ensured through distinguishing, for instance, counties and provinces from cities and towns. Before voting in chambers or plenary sessions, members have the opportunity to discuss the issues in the agenda, seek support for their views or reports, or propose common positions in political groups and national delegations. The current political groups are the Group European People's Party (EPP/CCE), the Socialist Group (SOC), the Independent and Liberal Democrat Group (ILDG), and the European Conservatives and Reformists Group (ECR), in addition to a considerable number of members who have not indicated political affiliation with any of these groups. While members can follow cross-national principles and values around which political groups are organized, they

can also consider the implications of the texts to be adopted for specific properties of their countries in the meetings of national delegations.

On top of this structure, the presidency and the Bureau of the Congress reflect primarily the local-regional divide, and the composition of the Statutory Forum emphasizes national composition. The Bureau, tasked with ensuring the continuity of the work of CLRAE between sessions, consists of the president of the Congress and the members of the chamber bureaux including their presidents. While the Bureau works on the general policy of the Congress, specific monitoring missions and the coordination of committees, the Statutory Forum, which consists of all members of the Bureau and presidents of national delegations, can act on behalf of the Congress for the adoption of texts, in particular reports. Thus, the Statutory Forum can increase the number of meetings where decisions can be taken, while the Bureau ensures the continuity between plenary and forum meetings. Furthermore, the chairs of committees and the presidents of political groups can also participate in Statutory Forum meetings as *ex officio* members without voting rights. In addition to the Bureau and the Statutory Forum, the secretariat performs administrative tasks and ensures day-to-day running of CLRAE.

Overall, the national, political and domestic-institutional diversity of subnational authorities that CLRAE represents is institutionalized through the organization of national delegations, political groups and two chambers for local and regional entities. Meanwhile, the diversity of working areas relating to statutory tasks and political goals is addressed through the three committees, and the continuity between plenary, chamber and committee meetings is provided by the Bureau, Statutory Forum and the secretariat.

### 6.2.3 Comparison of main structural features

The descriptions given above show that the CoR and CLRAE are highly similar organizations with respect to their major structural features. To reiterate, this similarity can be summarized by the following observations:

- They are established as advisory bodies within two major European organizations, the European Union and the Council of Europe.
- Their original inception follows the foundation or major reform of their parent organizations.

- If their final forms are taken as reference, their establishment coincides in 1994, covering the same time period up to today.
- Membership is based on selective representation paying attention to domestic electoral mandate and fairness with respect to political landscape and geographic coverage of each country.
- The core of activities is regular meetings of plenary sessions.
- The major result of these core activities is the adoption of official documents in response to institutional mandates and contemporary issues.
- The drafting process works through subject- or task-specific commissions or committees.
- The diversity in the background of members is institutionalized through having both political groups and national delegations.
- Executive-like branches ensure the continuity and coordination despite long periods between meetings and the complexity of overall organization.

Nonetheless, they are by no means identical, and a number of details can be found in the descriptions to show the points of divergence—categorical or in degree. This section will focus on overarching similarities and leave the discussion of differences to the upcoming sections.

First of all, the methodological implications of these common features highlight the comparative logic of the case study. In addition to being similar enough for comparability, CoR and CLRAE are proposed as cases belonging to the same category of institutions, and typical cases representing this category. Therefore, the above list of characteristics can be seen as ideal-typical qualities of the formal organizations which institutionalize multilevel politics through direct representation of subnational political actors with a Europe-wide scope. Second, if the level of similarity which has been demonstrated so far is considered together with the findings from the survey data, the proximity of quantitative measurements across cases can be condoned more confidently. Thereby, by virtue of their overarching similarities, CoR and CLRAE are expected to exert similar degrees of influence in terms of the relationship between institutions and actors, or in this case, organizations and their members.

However, both implications—comparability and similar degrees of influence—need further explication. First, even if CoR and CLRAE are selected as typical cases, they are also the *only* cases when a narrow definition of the formal insti-



tutionalization of multilevel politics is adopted. Further analytical value can be derived by identifying the qualities that should be expected from the institutionalized forms of multilevel politics in general. In other words, drawing on Sartori's 'ladder of abstraction' (1970), a certain degree of generalization can be achieved by relaxing some defining attributes of the category and thus allowing a larger coverage of cases. Second, while similar degrees of influence and similar institutional characteristics are observed separately, an explanation should be offered to link the two.

Framing the common features of CoR and CLRAE as the provision of supranational fora for subnational political actors will address both analytical objectives, namely, determining the basis of generalizability and linking institutional influence and institutional characteristics. First, other cases apart from the Committee and the Congress can also be understood as institutionalizing multilevel politics by virtue of providing supranational fora for subnational actors, even if their scope of representation is narrower and their degree of formality lower than CoR and CLRAE. Second, this quality of institutions means an exposure of subnational actors to a new form of political activity capable of shaping their views.

The existence of supranational fora<sup>6</sup> is also a distinctive quality, unlike anything that can be found outside of the institutionalized practices of multilevel politics, least of all in the conventional practices of national politics. For subnational actors, regular sessions mean systematically meeting and working with their counterparts from other countries; the secure institutional status within the EU and the CoE means sharing an environment with other diplomatic or Eurocratic staff hence an at least equivalent standing; the wide range of addressed issues means the assumption of a role much larger than local or regional responsibilities without necessarily losing sight of subnational concerns; drafting opinions in specialized bodies means the possibility of having an impact which would otherwise be unavailable to them; and the organization along national and party-political lines means an opportunity to differentiate intra-national and cross-national matters.

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<sup>6</sup>It should be noted that the term 'supranational' is used here with a rather broad meaning, to draw attention to the multinational or international character of these fora. In other words, it does not stand for one side of the supranational-international dichotomy. In this sense, this terminological choice does not imply an implicit claim about the CoE being a supranational as opposed to an intergovernmental institution.

The idea that providing supranational fora is one of the most significant added values of CoR and CLRAE is also prevalent among the members of these organizations. All interviews in which a question on the areas of strength of the institutions is asked confirm this view without exception, although this was not posited in advance and there was no specific probing to evaluate such a statement. Moreover, interviewees who are members of both institutions did not distinguish the Committee and the Congress in this respect. Therefore, the expression of this feature as an important quality common in both organizations on the part of the members yields additional empirical support to the explanation that the similarity in institutional characteristics is manifested in the similar degrees of institutional influence. These views are usually qualified by expressions like ‘meeting new people’, ‘seeing the opportunities of cooperation’, ‘hearing new ideas’, ‘learning from other experiences’, ‘sharing good practice’, ‘understanding different perspectives’, etc. More specifically, this point is expressed in one of the interviews as follows:

On the both sides, even if the issues are different in the Council [of Europe] and the European Union, you have one important common point, in the Congress and in the Committee. It is the secondary effect of the activities, which is very very helpful for the regions. If you are coming together with all these members, it is a unique opportunity to have contacts, to make networks, to know each other, to go into relationships and discover what happens in the different member states—not only in the national level that you can see on television reports but also what happens inside, on a very concrete basis in different countries. So it is a great opportunity to make progress with a kind of integration coming [from] bottom-up. (Interview 1)

To illustrate these effects, another interviewee mentions the speeches given by guest speakers:

In the last session in March [2015], we had a speech of the mayor of Lampedusa [...], we had a speech of the mayor of Calais, also of the mayor of Kobane. It is interesting to have direct contact with people [like them], it is another thing to see them on TV. [...] We are taking a

little time to do [this job], because we are convinced that this is useful.  
For me it is a positive experience. (Interview 2)

It can be remarked that the selection of speakers in view of topical issues of the time—the situation of refugees in Europe in the case of Lampedusa and Calais, and the civil war in Syria in the case of Kobane—engages subnational political actors with European and even international issues. Since immigration and asylum pose political challenges to be addressed by subnational authorities, the sharing of experiences among the local and regional actors of Europe is crucial to develop effective policies. Meanwhile, the reconstruction of a new political system in a country which is neighbouring Europe, and enduring a civil war provides the opportunity to learn about innovative ways of local and regional self-government, democracy and autonomy, which is realized through the institutional channel of the Congress. It is also interesting to see the emphasis on the importance of actual and direct contact in contrast to learning about political developments through other media. Therefore, by facilitating networking, transnational cooperation and policy learning, the institutionalization of multilevel politics contributes to a change in the perceptions of subnational actors about their role in the politics of Europe and the world.

To conclude, the Committee and the Congress can be understood as similar institutions with respect to their formal structures. On one hand, the analytical implication is a further support for their comparability. On the other hand, their ability to constitute supranational fora for subnational actors points to a significant institutional effect on actors. The subjective views, which are expressed by the interviewees about the importance of establishing relations with their counterparts from other countries thanks to these organizations, illustrate the link between institutional influence and favourable views on multilevel politics. However, this may not be the only explanation for the similarity of their influence over the views of the actors on multilevel politics. For this reason, differences between them will also be discussed in the following sections to examine relevant nuances.

### 6.3 Relative priority of European and subnational levels

One of the central dimensions of studying multilevel politics, according to the new institutionalist approach as proposed in this thesis, and especially historical institutionalism, is the redistribution of competences, resources and power among the levels of decision making. This has been operationalized in terms of actors' views on the strength of European institutions and on the domestic competences of subnational authorities. The quantitative measurement of these factors in the survey design proved to be significant in explaining the views on multilevel politics, but showed negligible difference across CoR and CLRAE. The aim of this section is to revisit this dimension of analysis in view of observed institutional characteristics. In principle, both the Committee and the Congress, by virtue of embodying direct relations between subnational and supranational levels, would be expected to contribute to the redistribution of power upwards and downwards away from the national level. However, as the findings presented in this section will illustrate, the two organizations differ in this aspect; while CoR displays a stronger tendency to define itself as part of a supranational institutional architecture and to set its mission in terms of advancing European political projects, CLRAE is still predominantly interested in promoting local and regional democracy and decentralization.

#### 6.3.1 The CoR, European level and multilevel governance

In order to understand the extent to which CoR emphasizes the centrality of the European level<sup>7</sup>, the way in which its self-description and mission statements are presented in the official documentation is a useful place to start. First of all, the *raison d'être* of CoR is stated as 'bringing citizens closer to the European Union'<sup>8</sup>. The reasoning that underlies this statement can be summarized as follows: first,

<sup>7</sup>The claim that CoR prioritizes the European level is not intended to suggest that it disregards the subnational dimension. Instead, in view of comparative analytical goals, the aim is to highlight how the European level is indispensable to understand CoR's missions, in a way that cannot be said to be the case in CLRAE.

<sup>8</sup>This expression is used in the official website of CoR (2016), on the page 'Key Facts'. The expression 'bringing EU closer to citizens' is also in other official documents; two expressions seem to be used interchangeably to express the same idea.

the EU suffers from a democratic deficit; second, an awareness of its role in political life should be raised and its citizens should be included more in the European democratic process in order to enhance the legitimacy of the EU; and third, subnational actors are in the best position to perform these tasks as they live and work at the level closest to the citizens. In this sense, an existential aspect of CoR is explained through a fundamental challenge faced by the European integration and the EU. In addition, CoR puts great emphasis on the fact that a large part of the EU legislation and policy has impact at the subnational level or should be implemented by subnational authorities, giving a strong basis for the legitimacy of including them in European political processes.

Nonetheless, the three main principles put forward by CoR as part of its ‘Key Facts’ (CoR, 2016), namely multilevel governance, proximity and subsidiarity point to a much less simplistic self-image. Proximity, defined in terms of grass-root participation in political processes, can be seen as closely associated with the reasoning above, which implies an instrumental conception of the principle and the position of subnational authorities. Subsidiarity, which is distinctive in having legal leverage, points to the most appropriate and the lowest possible level of decision making. Yet its definition is given as the sharing of competences between all three levels. Multilevel governance, which is closely related to this conception of subsidiarity, is defined in terms of coordination and partnership of all levels with reference to the EU policy making. These three main principles therefore draw attention to the importance of a reorganization of governance among all levels and the special importance of the subnational level, while the point of reference usually stays as the European level. Moreover, the definition of multilevel governance is formulated in terms of cooperation and partnership, while a redistribution of competences is seen as predicated on subsidiarity.

All these can be seen in the Committee’s ‘Mission Statement’ (CoR, 2009a). To quote a few passages from the one-and-a-half page statement, the importance attached to the European level can be illustrated by the following phrases:

- “We are a political assembly [...] serving the cause of European integration”
- “Our mission is to involve regional and local authorities in the European decision-making process”
- “We vote on political recommendations for European strategies and participate in the preparation of community legislation”

- “We want to see Europe, united in diversity in a globalised world”
- “We play our part in promoting European democracy and citizenship and their values”
- “We are ambassadors of Europe in the regions, cities and municipalities and speak for them in the European debate”
- “Let’s build Europe in partnership!”

In addition to these, several phrases emphasize the coordination and partnership across all levels, and cooperation among subnational authorities, while the only phrase which seems to make an assertion for the latter in its own right is the following:

We claim autonomy for regional and local authorities and their right to secure appropriate financial resources to enable them to carry out their duties. We therefore promote the principles and mechanisms of good governance and encourage the process of decentralisation.

However, when a similar examination is conducted on the document titled ‘The political priorities of the European Committee of the Regions: 2015-2020’ (2015), terms related to ‘autonomy’ or ‘decentralization’ do not occur except for the presentation of subnational units of member states. Instead, five major points of priority are listed as European economy, the territorial dimension of the EU legislation, simpler and more connected Europe, stability and cooperation within and outside the EU, and dialogue between the EU institutions and citizens. While the European level stands as the reference point, stated goals which concern the subnational level in its own right are limited to secondary implications such as bridging the knowledge gap between regions and cities, and in a related way between urban and rural areas.

Finally, CoR has a renewed commitment to multilevel governance. Even if the analytical focus is shifted away from taking the European level as the reference, it is difficult to see explicitly whether this framing of multilevel governance automatically entails the strengthening of the subnational level. The Committee’s first white paper, ‘The White Paper on multi-level governance’ (CoR, 2009b), and the ensuing ‘Charter for Multilevel governance in Europe’ (CoR, 2011) illustrate a conception of multilevel governance which emphasizes partnership and coordination, and which tends to promote certain political values with respect to all

levels of decision making and the links between them. In this sense, the meaning of multilevel governance for subnational authorities is, first, their inclusion in supranational political processes, which is undoubtedly a crucial development as discussed when concluding the previous section, and second, the improvement in their institutional capacity alongside other levels. Both meanings presume a relative strengthening of the subnational level, as this is a prerequisite for effective participation at the European level and having an institutional capacity comparable to national and European levels. However, the materialization of this presumption is not set as a concrete and imminent political goal, or at best, it is expressed more tacitly, vaguely or with a lighter emphasis.

To conclude, an analysis of the official documents of CoR, in which common views on the levels of government can be observed, shows that it has a greater tendency to emphasize the importance of a stronger European level as compared to the subnational level. In general, either the European level is consistently taken as reference, or the emphasis is put on coordination and partnership among all levels, whereas the calls for stronger subnational authorities remain minor in comparison. Therefore, if the institutional characteristics of CoR are to be evaluated in terms of upwards and downwards redistribution of power, it can be more appropriately categorized as an organization which promotes the European level more systematically.

### **6.3.2 The CLRAE, subnational level and decentralization**

To begin with the self-description of CLRAE, the following statement which is posted on its official website (CLRAE, 2016a) can be seen as capturing the central elements:

Its role is to promote local and regional democracy, improve local and regional governance and strengthen authorities' self-government. It pays particular attention to application of the principles laid down in the European Charter of Local Self-Government. It encourages the devolution and regionalisation processes, as well as transfrontier co-operation between cities and regions.

Although CLRAE does not have a more extensive statement of core principles, it is easy to deduce from this quotation the special value attributed to local and

regional democracy, self-government, devolution and regionalization, supporting the claim that the strengthening of the subnational level is prioritized vis-à-vis other levels.

On the other hand, the national level also occurs quite frequently in the self-descriptive and adopted texts of CLRAE. For instance, it urges national governments to involve subnational authorities in their political decisions, the monitoring missions are aimed to assess the situation of local and regional democracy in member states as a whole, the Congress works on maintaining regular dialogue with member states and national associations of local and regional authorities, its addresses to other CoE bodies such as the Committee of Ministers are intended to be transmitted to national governments, and so on. However, the major implication of all these practices is the redistribution of power towards the subnational level; according to the definition by CLRAE, subsidiarity requires the transfer of some responsibilities and financial resources from central to local and regional authorities.

Within this context, any reference to the European level is almost non-existent in the case of CLRAE. However, this is hardly surprising. The Congress is, after all, a body of CoE, an organization which, when considered in terms of a supranational-intergovernmental dichotomy, is more appropriately qualified as intergovernmental<sup>9</sup> an intergovernmental organization which cannot be uncontroversially qualified as supranational. CoE does not have any agenda for a deeper integration, or any claim to constitute a new layer of government or a new locus of sovereignty. Furthermore, the most valued legal and political ground for the Congress is the Charter which derives its significance from the ratification by member states, hence having an international legal standing. The Congress continues to draft treaties—charters and conventions—as part of its long-term goals, and the effectiveness of these rely solely on the endorsement by national governments. Therefore, CLRAE can be seen as mainly operating to influence the axis between national and subnational levels.

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<sup>9</sup>However, this dichotomy is too simplistic for an accurate understanding of European institutions. For example, exceptions to the characterization of CoE as intergovernmental include, most importantly, its role with regard to the European Convention on Human Rights, and the supranational status of the European Court of Human Rights, although the implementation of court decisions still rests with the nation states.



This *modus operandi* can be seen as realistic, or realist in terms of international relations theory, as it acknowledges the primacy of national governments in political reality, by focusing efforts onto the national level and by relying on international legal norms. Yet, for the similar reasons, it can be seen as unrealistic to expect a meaningful effect on sovereign national competences due to encouragement by a body of an intergovernmental organization which expresses the willingness of local and regional entities. However, to the extent that electoral democratic processes genuinely work and that local and regional politics have independent leverage from central politics, CLRAE can contribute to the domestic demands for reform. For instance, to overcome the limitations posed by selective representation in the Congress, liaisons with national associations of local and regional governments can have a distinctive influence. In this area or other areas of action, the Congress can avoid accusations of illegitimate interference thanks to its international legal status.

The importance attached to empowering subnational authorities through decentralization can be illustrated by the content of the document ‘Priorities of the Congress: 2013-2016’ (CLRAE, 2013). In this text which was adopted as a resolution in the 23rd session (16-18 October 2012), three major objectives are defined. The first one, ‘raising the quality of local and regional democracy and human rights in Europe’ is a restatement of the overall mission of CLRAE as discussed above. Second, ‘rising to the new challenges resulting from the economic and financial crisis’ is framed with a focus on subnational resources and decentralization, by emphasizing local and regional funding, and local and regional authority reform. Finally, ‘developing co-operation and partnerships’ is taken to entail the promotion of local and regional democracy in countries neighbouring Europe. Any statements which can be interpreted as referring to the European level are about either the institutional reform of the Congress or partnership with the EU, showing that the relevance of the European level for the Congress is in large part contingent upon the role of the EU.

To conclude, the main focus of CLRAE is almost exclusively on the strengthening of subnational authorities. The constant references to the national level can be best understood as challenging the dominance of central authorities at the expense of local and regional authorities, but as taking into account the political reality at the same time. Meanwhile, the European level is almost absent from

its narratives. While it is not necessarily a promoter of multilevel governance in this respect, according to the broader conception developed in this thesis, it has a significant role to play in multilevel politics by promoting the downward transfer of competences.

### **6.3.3 Comparison on prioritized levels of government**

Drawing on the documentary analyses presented above, the comparative positions of CoR and CLRAE with respect to levels of government can be identified and linked to the views expressed by interviewed members. If the comparison is framed as one of supranational versus subnational, the subsection on CoR concluded on the priority of the former while that on CLRAE concluded on the priority of the latter. However, these conclusions entail subtler implications. CoR has an emphasis on relationships rather than power redistribution, with commitment to multilevel governance understood as coordination and partnership among all levels of decision making. Although subnational empowerment is a natural outcome of this strategy, this can only be deduced more indirectly. Meanwhile, the emphasis of CLRAE on the subnational level is more open and direct, with explicit and consistent encouragement of decentralization.

In this context, one question to be addressed is whether the comparative position of either side has any greater leverage. On the one hand, having observed in the main statistical models that subnational competences are more strongly associated with favourable views on multilevel politics, subnational autonomy can be put forward as a prerequisite of effective multilevel political activities. On the other hand, a strong European level is what distinguishes multilevel politics from decentralized national structures. In this respect, the Congress can be considered as having a more down-to-earth approach, while the Committee is prepared for a more ideal system of multilevel politics. If it is acknowledged that multilevel political practices do not represent the actual circumstances of politics for a considerable part of subnational actors, and further that there is still a huge disparity in the autonomy enjoyed by subnational authorities coming from different domestic backgrounds, the position of CLRAE is more likely to have an impact on a possible change in the balance between the levels of decision making. The approach of CoR has been interpreted as presuming the presence of competent

subnational authorities, the accuracy of which depends on the success of the approach of CLRAE which has been interpreted as more realistic. In this respect, the Committee and the Congress possess comparative advantages with regard to different aspects of multilevel politics, and thus complement each other.

These interpretations are also confirmed by the qualitative interviews. In one of the most clear assessments of the mandate, the mission and the *raison d'être* of both organizations, they are compared as the following:

[I]t is clear that the CoR does not have the expertise of the Congress on fundamental analysis of local democracy. On the other hand, the Congress is not expected to position itself in the (monitoring of) EU decision-making process. Sometimes the Congress' expertise may be of added value in a particular EU topic, but it will always be an outside and complementary expertise that does not replace the institutional legitimacy of the CoR's positioning within the European Union's decision-making process. (Interview 12)

Thus, local or regional self-government and the European level are seen as complementing each other, which also means a complementarity between the CoR and CLRAE. This understanding is reflected in the conceptions of multilevel governance<sup>10</sup> which embodies this complementarity. Several interviewees defined multilevel governance as a concept that can also apply to the internal structure of a country (notably Interviews 1, 2 and 10). More specifically, according to one interviewee, the German federal system is a successful example of multilevel governance in its own right, while the inclusion of the European level is a necessary extension which meets the rising importance of the EU (Interview 10).

Despite these conceptions of multilevel governance in a positive light, several ambiguities are also pointed out by the interviewees. For instance, it is admitted that multilevel governance is a good in itself especially because it involves the European level, but it is not very practical for actual politics at the subnational level:

No local or regional politician will run a campaign in his or her constituency on the issue of multilevel governance. However, the pursuit

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<sup>10</sup>The interviewees are asked to state their opinions on multilevel governance, since this would be a more familiar concept than multilevel politics. The views on multilevel governance are taken here as a proxy for the views on multilevel politics.

of multilevel governance is legitimate in the sense that, like subsidiarity, it constitutes in my view a sort of ‘meta-topic’ of European policies which aims at ensuring a proper methodology in decision-making and securing added value of European actions. (Interview 12)

Additionally, possible reasons for a reluctance to sign the Charter for Multilevel Governance in Europe, promoted by CoR, include reasonable grounds for questioning the necessity of making this kind of political proclamation with no real political or economic benefits (Interview 7). However, it is not entirely fair to depict the Committee as so distant from a vision of immediate empowerment of subnational authorities. Although decentralization and regionalization have not been an explicit part of the EU legislation, they were incentivized through criteria for structural funds and accession, as discussed in Chapter 1 with reference to existing studies on this subject (e.g. Brusis, 2002). This view is also confirmed by the interviewees from newer member states, mentioning this role of the EU as a driving force for territorial and institutional reform (Interview 5). CoR, with the inclusion of enlargement and neighbourhood policies on its agenda, played a crucial role in this process. But this role has a rather historical character in the face of slowing enlargement, and the impact of CoR for existing members is still less clear.

Meanwhile, the Committee situates itself within the institutional architecture of the EU, and the Congress bases its role on the international legal ground laid by the Charter and the task of supervising its implementation. Therefore, their complementarity also extends to their respective legal standings. With regard to driving decentralization during the accession of new members, for instance, it should be remarked that the EU relies on the norms generated by the CoE for a considerable part of the accession conditionalities (Sasse, 2008). Thus the CoE had come to the fore as the primary organization assisting Central and Eastern European countries with democratic transition, and with regard to the local and regional aspects of this assistance, the expertise of the Congress and the legal basis provided by the European Charter of Local Self-Government became important assets. In this respect, focusing on democracy was stated as the correct way forward for the CoE and CLRAE (Interview 1), while the CoR should not try to do what the Congress does (Interview 2). An experienced member of both

organizations asserts that CoR and CLRAE indeed try to avoid duplicates (Interview 11).

When the missions of CoR and CLRAE are clearly distinguished, the mission of the Committee was depicted by an interviewee almost exclusively with reference to the EU and the relationship among European regions, in a parallel way to the examined documents:

We have basically three missions. One mission is that we have to give advice to the Commission. [...] From my point of view, a much more important mission is that we are fostering the internal cohesion between the regions. We meet at least twice a month, with colleagues in the working groups and in the plenary, and on all issues we can immediately reflect and ask our colleagues if it is true what we read in the media about their situation at home with one problem or another, and they will tell us. Over time, they will learn that we are really interested in their own problems, and that we want to work together to try to solve it in a European context. If you know colleagues from all European regions, you can understand them better, you can tell your own people at home what the situation is, because you can learn from them first-hand. This is fostering the internal cohesion between the European regions. [...] The third thing is that we have to explain to people at home what the European Union is good for. In some countries, governments adopted the habit of making the European Union the scapegoat for their own shortcomings and failures. [...] We try to tell the people at home what the European Union does and what the benefits are. [...] [An additional] fourth point, also growing in importance, is staying in contact with our colleagues from the outside of the European Union. We need reliable contacts with our colleagues within the European Union and around it. (Interview 10)

It can be remarked from the above quotation that its second point reiterates what has been identified as the overarching commonality of both organizations in the previous section, but frames it with an emphasis on Europe as a cohesive unit which takes part in the solution of problems. In addition, the third and fourth points show that the mission of CoR is ensuring not only the representation of

subnational authorities at the European level, but also the representation of the EU at the subnational level, either within or outside its borders<sup>11</sup>. In this sense, these statements confirm the observation that the rising importance of the European level and multilevel politics are closely linked in the case of CoR.

To conclude, the members of CoR perceive the major characteristics of their organization largely in the framework of the EU, while the members of CLRAE emphasize local democracy. These observations stand witness to the link between the views on the redistribution of competences across levels of governance and the views on multilevel politics. However, there is not sufficient evidence to claim that the CoR encourages more favourable views on stronger European institutions, and CLRAE encourages more favourable views on decentralization, as the survey data do not suggest a difference across these cases in the values of corresponding variables. Therefore, these links are more accurately explained as the satisfaction of separate expectations from institutions, whereby the intensity of expectations are independent of institutional membership. The view that the Committee and the Congress should and do perform different tasks and complement each other affirms this conclusion: one does not have to be a member of the Committee to recognize the added value of the European level and the role of CoR in this regard, and one does not have to be a member of the Congress to recognize the value of local and regional self-government and the role of CLRAE in enhancing it. The crucial point is that, for successful institutionalization of multilevel politics, institutional characteristics of relevant organizations must embody these features at least partially.

## 6.4 Institutional effectiveness

Having discussed the overarching similarities between CoR and CLRAE, and different prioritizations of the levels of governance, their comparative advantages will also be explained through rationalist and sociological approaches of new institutionalism. To begin with the dimension of effectiveness, this section will

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<sup>11</sup>This interviewee has had particular duties with regard to neighbouring and candidate countries. The addition of the fourth point to the three main missions can be linked to his personal interests in this regard.

present the reasons why CoR is in a more advantageous position in this respect<sup>12</sup>. More precisely, the effectiveness of an institution from a rationalist perspective is primarily concerned with the possibilities of reaching collective decisions, and the degree of effectiveness can be observed in three areas: first, the amount of collective decisions that have been reached, second, the existence of mechanisms which facilitate such decisions, and third, the impact of these decisions on intended results. The following subsections will stress the advantages that the Committee possesses in these three areas.

### 6.4.1 Output

The CoR and CLRAE differ in degree with regard to several institutional characteristics which are presented as areas of similarity in Section 6.2. Among these, the frequency of meetings, the number of commissions/committees, and the amount of output in terms of adopted texts are particularly relevant for observing the workload that each organization accomplishes.

First of all, although plenary meetings are a common feature of both organizations, the Committee meets six times a year for plenary sessions as compared to the Congress which meets only twice a year. In addition, six CoR commission meetings are scheduled for times between plenaries, doubling the number of work days that are spent for CoR activities throughout the year. The number of commissions/committees also makes a difference between CoR and CLRAE. Not only the six commissions of CoR as compared to the three committees of CLRAE show a higher degree of specialization, but also this difference results in arrangements whereby CoR members usually participate in two commissions, while CLRAE members serve as the full member of one committee and sometimes the alternate of a second. Therefore, when the higher frequency of plenary and commission meetings, the separate scheduling of commissions, and the multiple membership in commissions are taken into account, the balance between the dual responsibility of subnational actors in relation to the European institutions and the local or regional units is pulled towards the former in the case of CoR.

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<sup>12</sup>Most of the points which are discussed in this section draw on the major institutional characteristics presented in Section 6.2, and focus on the differences in degree between the cases. In order to avoid unnecessary repetition, descriptions of each organization are not separately provided, unlike previous sections.

The intensity of the work of CoR naturally results in a larger output in the form of adopted texts. For instance, in 2015, the Committee adopted 59 opinions and resolutions, while the Congress adopted only 16 recommendations, 19 resolutions and one declaration. Yet the output of CoR is even larger in terms of its content for two reasons. First, many statements are repeated between the resolutions and recommendations of the Congress which address the same issues. Furthermore, CoR opinions are much longer than CLRAE resolutions and recommendations, and a much higher proportion of the texts adopted by CLRAE is reserved for formalities, such as recalling the legal bases and addressing the text to relevant authorities. Thereby, a significantly larger amount of substantive content is presented in the texts adopted by CoR.

In order to investigate the link between this output and multilevel politics, a content analysis of a sample of texts was also conducted, by measuring the references made to the domestic, supranational and multilevel spheres of politics, as discussed in Chapter 3. The overall difference between the two organizations was not found statistically significant, in a way that affirms the lack of difference in the survey data. Precisely, CLRAE texts display 50% reference to the domestic sphere, 26% to the supranational, and 24% to the multilevel; while CoR texts display 40% reference to the domestic sphere, and 30% to each of the supranational and multilevel spheres<sup>13</sup>. However, when the proportions of references are disaggregated into commissions/committees within each organization, the effect of internal arrangements are more visible, as presented in Table 6.5.

These results show that the difference between the committees of CLRAE is larger and more significant than those of CoR<sup>14</sup>. At the same time, however, the main source of difference in references to the multilevel sphere is the Governance Committee, the main tasks of which include institutional matters such as the rules and procedures of the Congress and cooperation with other organizations. In this regard, the link between the institutional mechanisms and multilevel politics is by and large limited to the organizational matters of CLRAE, while the debates on

<sup>13</sup>The largest proportion difference, which is in the references to the domestic sphere at 10%, is only significant at  $p = 0.21$ .

<sup>14</sup>Since the equality of variance cannot be assumed in the subset of CLRAE documents according to significant results from Levene's test (Levene, 1960), robust post-hoc analyses of pairwise comparison are conducted using Games-Howell test (Games and Howell, 1976) to ascertain the significance levels.



**Table 6.5:** References to spheres of governance in adopted texts

	Domestic	Supranational	Multilevel	<i>N</i>
<b>CoR</b>	<b>40%</b>	<b>30%</b>	<b>30%</b>	<b>72</b>
CIVEX	45%	18%	37%	13
COTER	26%	36%	38%	14
ECOS	40%	31%	29%	18
EDUC	57%	17%	26%	10
ENVE	35%	43%	22%	14
NAT	47%	28%	25%	3
<i>ANOVA</i>	$p < 0.05$	$p < 0.05$	<i>insig.</i>	
<b>CLRAE</b>	<b>51%</b>	<b>24%</b>	<b>26%</b>	<b>87</b>
Monitoring	68%	17%	15%	37
Current affairs	43%	30%	27%	42
Governance	5%	44%	51%	8
<i>ANOVA</i>	$p < 0.01$	$p < 0.05$	$p < 0.01$	

current affairs display a more balanced distribution and the monitoring of subnational democracy and elections is naturally concerned with the domestic sphere. On the other hand, CoR follows a more thematic differentiation among commissions, whereby CIVEX assumes the responsibility of several institutional affairs as well as decentralization and subnational governance, and COTER deals with budgetary issues, among other policy areas. The absence of significant difference in references to the multilevel sphere of governance can be attributed to this equivalence among commissions apart from differing policy areas, and interpreted as an illustration of how the internal mechanisms of CoR are designed to favour multilevel politics in a holistic way. Meanwhile, the only significant differences among the commissions of CoR occur in the preference for the domestic sphere for education policy, and in the preference for the supranational sphere for environment policy<sup>15</sup>, while in general CoR is not very selective in terms of the correspondence between levels of government and policy areas.

Therefore, not only the higher frequency of CoR meetings ensures more intense contacts between subnational actors and European institutions, but also the amount of textual output and the proportion of multilevel politics therein indicate stronger institutional arrangements. While this is not starkly visible in the total output, a detailed examination of the commissions/committees shows that

<sup>15</sup>Pairwise comparisons through Tukey tests (Tukey, 1949) reveal that the only significant contrasts are found in EDUC-COTER, ENVE-CIVEX and EDUC-ENVE.

CoR has a higher potential for generating common positions favouring multilevel politics across a wide range of policy areas.

### 6.4.2 Party-based mechanisms

While the higher frequency of meetings and more specialized organization lead to more effective institutional processes resulting in a larger output, the stronger position of political parties in CoR constitutes an additional dimension of effectiveness through permanence and efficient decision making mechanisms. One interviewee who has a long experience in both CoR and CLRAE states that the main problem facing these organizations is the non-permanence of the members (Interview 1). The administrative bodies ensure the continuity of the processes, but these are staffed with bureaucratic rather than political members. Political groups play an important role in providing continuity, but this is more crucial in the case of CoR as compared to CLRAE:

We must make a difference between the Committee and the Congress. In the Congress, the political groups are not so important. [...] It depends also on the focus of the work and the situation in monitoring affairs, because there you have issues which are not much related to classical political parties, [but rather related to] more general conceptions of state management and different national interests. In the Committee of the Regions, political groups are playing a central role. They became more and more important in the last years. Political groups are well-organized, they have stable staff, and for the members it is a way to compensate the non-permanent presence. The staff of political groups are the link between the administration of the Committee and the members from different groups. [...] [Over time], in the Committee of the Regions, political groups became really stronger than in the beginning. At the same time the national groups are declining in importance. They are still important but things changed. And this is not the same in the Congress. (Interview 1)

This statement points to two important contrasts regarding the strength of political groups: with national delegations in CoR, and between CoR and CLRAE.

First, within the Committee, national delegations are not in a position to provide the same degree of continuity as political groups. In many cases, the most effective form of national coordination can only be realized by regional offices (Interviews 5, 7 and 8), whereas party group coordination offices are organized and staffed within the CoR's premises. Meanwhile, the patterns of leadership display variation across countries; for instance, while the delegation of Poland had been chaired by the same member of CoR for a long time at the time of the fieldwork (Interview 5), for the delegations of Spain and Germany the rotation of leadership was emphasized as a way of ensuring the fair representation of all autonomous communities or *länder* (Interviews 8 and 10).

In addition to these organizational advantages, all interviews from CoR state political groups as the main pillar of organization. The answers given by the head of the French delegation to the questions on the place of national delegations highlight the clear relative importance of political groups:

The national delegation is the defence of the interests of a nation. The political group means a much more European vision. [...] Therefore, the political group has a very large importance and it is legitimate, because it allows to go past the national egoisms to the benefit of a more European vision. [...] You should not attach too much importance to national delegations. It is not the decisive element of voting. What constitutes the decisive element is the membership in this or that party, and its vision on this or that subject. (Interview 3)<sup>16</sup>

Although it is admitted in one part of the interview that fundamental interests for a country will lead to going beyond political cleavages, giving the example of Common Agricultural Policy for France, the emphasis on the primacy of political groups is prevalent throughout the conversation. Another noteworthy point is that the legitimacy of party-based political activities at the European level is framed in view of the necessity to diminish the divisiveness of nationally based activities. From a rationalist perspective, this can be explained by the fact that it is easier to form common positions, hence reach collective decisions, through a small number of political parties as compared to 28 national delegations. The head of the German delegation, representing the largest country in the EU, expressed similar

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<sup>16</sup> Author's translation from the French original.

opinions and remarks that, as a national delegation, they are a minority in CoR and cannot pursue an initiative by seeking support from other national delegations (Interview 10).

In this sense, the central procedures of CoR are institutionalized through political groups, as explained by a member of staff (Interview 4). The drafting of an opinion begins with the appointment of a rapporteur, and the fair distribution of these appointments is ensured through a point-based system including the leaderships of political groups. Accordingly, each group has a certain amount of points for a period, which is determined by the number of seats, and which they can use to secure a rapporteurship in their prioritized policy areas. They also have wild cards which can be used for highly prioritized areas. While these wild cards can be an important advantage for smaller groups and the issues which they particularly care about, larger groups still prevail in case of conflict. Therefore, the rules and procedures that are designed along the lines of political groups enable the system to work by avoiding the complete exclusion of minorities and potential stalemates at the same time.

Finally, when the Committee and the Congress are compared in terms of the relative importance of political groups and national delegations, it is difficult to observe such a stark difference in the case of CLRAE. While the political groups of the Congress do not benefit from separate secretariats and rely on those of the Parliamentary Assembly, one advantage vis-à-vis national delegations is the regular meetings of the group leaders with the Bureau (Interview 2). However, this has not resulted in a system comparable to the point-based distribution of rapporteurships in CoR. Similarly, political groups of CLRAE cannot provide the same effect of permanence as those of CoR since the coordination between plenary sessions is quite weak. In more general terms, as seen in the above-quoted segment of Interview 1, the political groups in CLRAE have not reached the same degree of importance as their counterparts in CoR. On the contrary, national delegations may sometimes become stronger sources of allegiance, as one interviewee noticed that the delegates from certain countries tend to follow national directives at the expense of party positions (Interview 2). The interviewee interprets this type of attitudes, first, as a result of weak subnational autonomy at home countries, and second, as a challenge against open-minded debate in the Congress. On this basis,

the relative strength and weakness of political groups can be seen as a source of the differences in the institutional capacity between the two organizations.

### 6.4.3 Impact

In terms of the general institutional architecture of the Council of Europe and the European Union, the Congress has the *prima facie* advantage of having an equal standing with the Parliamentary Assembly with special competences while the Committee is only an advisory body. But CoR should still be seen as stronger as it has ‘more money, more activity and effective institutional mechanisms’ (Interview 11). It should also be remarked that the Committee of Ministers is the single most important body of CoE, and just like the European Parliament is stronger than the Parliamentary Assembly, CoR is stronger than CLRAE despite its merely advisory status (Interview 1).

While it is possible to notice a quick adoption of the recommendations of the Congress in some cases and a gradual evolution towards better subnational democracy in others (Interview 2), the impact through European legislation that the Committee may have means the chance of sanctioned implementation which is qualitatively distinct from mere recommendations (Interview 9). Moreover, even though the European Charter for Local Self-Government is an international legal document, enforcement is difficult as it cannot be brought before the European Court of Human Rights or any other international court; the best chance of sanctioning is linked to the approach of domestic supreme courts regarding the constitutional status of the Charter, which does not have a pan-European pattern (Interview 2). In this context, CoR can be expected to exert a more significant impact on politics, and this impact primarily materializes in the form of the input to the European legislation.

The Committee has been preparing impact reports since 2008, which track the influence of its opinions through legislative procedures and implementation. An analysis of the last available report (CoR, 2014) shows that a broad definition of ‘impact’ is used and includes four types: proposals which are taken up in the final legislation, recommendations which are considered in proposed legislation, contributions to ongoing political debates, and references made to CoR positions. One important policy tool that CoR uses is follow-up activities for opinions, which is

seen in these reports as an important part of the strategies to increase the impact. Among other strategies, the report observes that the relations with the European Parliament and the European Commission are already very good, and that other institutions of the EU expect CoR to focus on locally and regionally relevant topics. In this regard, the report also suggests improving relations with the Council of the EU and delivering the contributions expected by other institutions.

The equivalent of the Committee's impact reports and follow-up activities for the Congress are activity reports<sup>17</sup>. The last published report at the time of writing (CLRAE, 2016*b*) similarly emphasizes the strengthening of monitoring and post-monitoring procedures akin to the follow-up activities of CoR, such as the roadmap agreements with several governments on decentralization. Another similarity with CoR impact reports is the importance attached to rather informal effects such as knowledge transfer and capacity building at the subnational level. The most notable difference, however, is the fact that the Congress operates on the basis of the European Charter of Local Self-Government. For instance, one of the main challenges identified in the report is the high number of derogations on the Charter. For this reason, the impact of the Congress largely depends on the cooperation of each and every national government, and it is highly variable across countries. Thereby, the same degree of impact cannot be expected from CLRAE since this depends on the contingency of the cooperation on the part of national governments, and even when this is achieved, this is at best uneven across Europe.

Alongside the internal mechanisms of each body, another aspect of overall effectiveness is the efficiency of the existence of two separate organizations of multilevel politics. One of the interviewees (Interview 13) attached great importance to this issue. First, her vision for the future development of institutions is based on closer cooperation between the EU and the CoE, while she emphasized that this should not entail any sort of hierarchy. Second, she thought that CLRAE has an important role to play regarding multilevel politics as much as the CoR. However, she also drew attention to the fact that this duality increases the risk of duplication which should be minimized. In fact, the Committee and the Congress have been coordinating their activities since the establishment of the former. This

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<sup>17</sup>In CLRAE, the reports addressed to the Committee of Ministers are also called activity reports. Here, the focus is on the reports published with the title 'State of the Congress'.

cooperation was formalized in 2005 with an agreement between the two organizations, and involves regular meetings of a 'Contact Group' and a 'High Level Group' comprising of presidents and vice-presidents. Given the evident value of coordination, a relatively low level of effectiveness, which can be attributed to CLRAE in view of the criteria discussed in this section, does not necessarily mean a weak institution insofar as this results in a meaningful complementarity between institutions.

To conclude, with different legal and policy tools at their disposal, both CoR and CLRAE make the best of their capabilities to exert significant impact on politics. However, thanks to more frequent and efficient institutional processes, hence a larger amount of output, CoR is more likely to be more influential overall. Additionally, its direct relationship to the European legislation is a significant factor which facilitates the translation of opinions into practice as compared to the difficulties of negotiating with each national government separately. For these reasons, the evaluation of the two organizations suggests that CoR has the comparative advantage of being a more effective institution than CLRAE, although this can be expected in a constellation of complementarity whereby the latter has other comparative advantages, such as normative qualities as discussed in the next section.

## **6.5 Normative qualities of institutions**

The final aspect in which the comparative advantages of institutions will be discussed is their capacity to generate and develop political norms which contribute to the rise of multilevel politics. Such contributions can be seen in both organizations. For instance, in the case of the Committee, the aforementioned White Paper on Multilevel Governance and the more recent Charter for Multilevel Governance in Europe aim to diffuse the view that multilevel governance should be the normal state of affairs. The Congress has a much longer history of international norm generation as the author of the European Charter of Local Self-government. It has also broadened the scope of subnational democracy through a draft European Charter of Regional Democracy which has fallen short of being adopted as a binding text but which has led to a set of principles in the form of the Reference Framework on Regional Democracy. Although the main focus of CLRAE

is subnational democracy, it also works on developing similar texts on multilevel governance which can serve as a stronger legal basis in the future (Interview 11).

On the one hand, CLRAE's expertise is the source of a comparative advantage vis-à-vis CoR in the normative aspect of institutionalization. On the other hand, several factors which make CoR a more effective institution are also those which pose obstacles against the development of political norms for multilevel relations. More specifically, its high degree of specialization through six subject-specific commissions may be the reason for missing more fundamental political debates on multilevel politics, or its strong focus on technical details in order to impact European legislation may alienate the members from the content of the texts that they discuss. In the words of one interviewee:

One of the great problems of [CoR and CLRAE] is the fact that they are not permanent. The members also have work to do at home, and during some days they are coming together and they must realize something. [...] We have plenaries, six in the Committee and two in the Congress, with some interesting results. We have interesting discussions, we have the possibility of adopting opinions. There are also opportunities of networking. But I think, especially in the Committee (I mean in the Congress it is easier), we are losing too much time with hundreds and hundreds amendments during hours and hours, and this is not the best way to use the time that we spend together. We must reduce this kind of exercise with better preparation in the commissions. And we need more time for deep political debate with members, with commissioners and also other responsible people from the European sphere. We need classical debate about opinions. We need more time for political debate, and we also need more time for networking. (Interview 1)

In this respect, the larger amount of output and the systematized rules and procedures that have been discussed as the comparative advantages of CoR come at the cost of classical political debate. It is apparent from the above statement that the Congress does not suffer from the problem of over-specialization as much as CoR. Instead, even though the total amount of time spent for CLRAE meetings is more limited, this time can be better used for political debates with potentially



normative effects. For instance, one interviewee describes the main instrument that the Congress uses as providing 'a safe space for talking', and thus creating political debate that might not have been otherwise possible (Interview 13). Furthermore, another interviewee who thinks that the political culture of the Congress is very important describes its mission as the following:

The mission of the Congress is to offer a meeting place to explore the possibilities but also the limits of democracy. It is a good place to give orientation on the big questions that are now in our society. The Congress is really a place for discussion with open mind, without the risk of being sanctioned. For me it is important that we have this larger European context, this kind of forum, to meet each other, to have this discussion, with a positive attitude to find a way [to reach] a consensus, to promote democratic initiatives, to give support to democracy, and also to pick up important questions which we have—not only institutionally, but also in other areas. For instance, what you have in democracy, in cultural area, diversity in society and other questions. (Interview 9)

The concerns about over-specialization have interesting implications, which can be extended to reconsider some fundamental issues of political theory, such as Max Weber's (1946) distinction between professional politicians and the bureaucracy. These observations suggest that the members of CoR resemble more and more technical specialists. Yet this does not mean that the subnational actors are moving to positions which live *off* politics rather than *for* politics; instead, taking up responsibilities in the Committee is hardly motivated by individual material gain, hence it requires dedication to certain political goals. On the other hand, the legitimation that CoR serves also leads to a reconsideration of Weberian ideal types (ibid.). The inclusion of subnational actors in European processes is deemed necessary since the proximity to the citizens, the special knowledge of local and regional politics, and the experience of implementation enable them to provide a valuable input to policy decisions, hence rational-bureaucratic legitimation. But the same logic can also be used as an inherently democratic legitimation<sup>18</sup> to in-

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<sup>18</sup>Although democratic legitimation is not among the ideal types that Weber identifies, one interesting implication is concerned with the intertwinement of descriptive and normative accounts of legitimacy.

clude those actors who are directly affected by decisions taken at the European level.

In this sense, the CoR in particular and probably European institutions in general constitute a situation in which the lines between political and bureaucratic processes, and between rationalistic and democratic forms of legitimation are blurred. The following excerpt from an interview highlights this mixed type of legitimation for CoR:

European level understands more and more that if you want to make solutions, if you want to give answers to challenges, and if you want to make improvements for European citizens, local and regional level can give input of what is really going on and what people really needs, and also give input on the way you could execute their policies, because more than 50% of the implementation of European measures and policies in different sectors are done by the local and regional levels. So if you want to be successful, make sure that we can do it, make sure that it is effective in our reach. Therefore it is necessary that local and regional level gets a good position in this policy making process, in the law making process, so to put us ahead in the process of policy making, in the expert groups, in drafting; [we need] to give our expertise, to give the European level more comfort that their policy will be worked out. [...] So it is about giving us a better position in this governance, it is about giving us a better position in policy making and policy execution, it is about giving us more skills, opportunities to work on this level, and of course it is about the effectiveness of measures, maybe some money too. (Interview 6)

The legitimacy of the Committee, therefore, is derived from not only channelling the real needs of people into the European level, but also from being successful and effective, and making use of subnational expertise. In the approach embedded in the above statement, it is not possible to categorically distinguish these types of legitimation.

Another implication concerns the dual function of CoR, being both an advisory body and a representative assembly as discussed in Chapter 1, for which the mixed legitimacy is arguably the most accurate approach. However, the inter-

esting point is that its evolution is moving in a direction opposite to the initial expectations of academics who evaluated the establishment of the Committee. Among the early assessments of CoR, pessimistic accounts dismissed the possibility of real impact from an advisory body, while optimistic accounts drew attention to the potential of an assembly consisting of actual politicians. Both camps are challenged by the present observations. To the extent that the concerns regarding over-specialization are valid, CoR in fact evolved into an influential and stronger institutional position, but at the cost of certain political qualities. While it could not be realistically expected to become a third chamber of the EU, its self-strengthening through specialized competences rather than political leverage was even more unexpected.

To conclude, just like the Council of Europe is the main organization championing fundamental European political values such as the rule of law, human rights and democracy, CLRAE performs its function as a body of CoE and adds local and regional self-government to this list. Therefore, in comparison with CoR which has visibly more effective institutional features, CLRAE has the distinctive advantage of being an institution which develops and diffuses norms and values accustoming subnational actors to, above all, democratic local and regional self-government, and by that virtue, to multilevel politics.

## **6.6 Complementary institutions of multilevel politics**

In this chapter, the re-evaluation of the survey data with respect to membership in different organizations has shown that no significant quantitative difference is observed in either the dependent variable or the independent variables. In this sense, the findings of the comparative case study of CoR and CLRAE has been presented in terms of their overarching similarities and comparative advantages. Namely, the Committee and the Congress display the common feature of providing supranational fora for subnational actors, which has been found as extremely valuable by the members of both organizations and which is arguably the fundamental aspect of the institutionalization of multilevel politics. Furthermore, one area of comparative advantage is the prioritized levels of governance; while

the Committee is primarily interested in consolidating the European level as a legitimate sphere of action for subnational actors, the Congress aims to further the intrinsic competences of local and regional authorities by championing decentralization. The second area of comparative advantages is concerned with the pragmatic and normative capacities of institutions; CoR draws on effective institutional arrangements through more permanent, efficient and influential mechanisms, but it is difficult to sustain norm-generating qualities at the same time as these processes. Meanwhile, CLRAE, with its focus on drafting texts which set international precedents, contributes to the diffusion of European political norms and values which parallel the broader vision of the CoE.

Although this comparative case study is designed within the same theoretical framework as the quantitative part of the empirical research, the findings from the quantitative and qualitative parts do not exactly match. More precisely, the comparative advantages regarding institutional characteristics are not reflected in the survey data which yield similar results in the corresponding variables. One possible explanation for this mismatch could be the imperfections related to the quantitative data. However, assuming that the sample is accurately representative and sufficient, another explanation is possible. An actor's views on the competences of the authorities at various levels of governance, his/her assessment of the effectiveness of institutions, and various forms of political identification are not necessarily the direct result of the corresponding institutional characteristics of the organization of which the actor is a member. Instead, these should be understood as relevant expectations of actors from institutions, the satisfaction of which complements the institutionalization of multilevel politics. In this respect, even if any organization does not satisfy all of these expectations, a roughly equivalent distribution of comparative advantages, as argued in this chapter, encourages more favourable views on multilevel politics as compared to the absence of institutional effects, and results in similar degrees of favourable attitudes across cases.

Nonetheless, this does not mean that the findings from quantitative and qualitative parts of the research are disconnected. If these institutional characteristics affect actors in a way that leads to favourable views on multilevel politics, this effect should be captured, at least implicitly, by the variable of institutional influence. More explicitly, the measurement of the variable included two ways of assessing the institutions from the perspective of the member: professional sat-

isfaction and personal importance. In this respect, the variable of institutional influence contains information on the degree to which institutions meet actor expectations in two ways. A two-layered new-institutionalist explanation can be constructed on this basis. First, when individual-level attitudes on power distribution, the effectiveness and the material benefits of institutions, and political identification are controlled for, the influence of transnational institutions is a significant factor which enhances positive views on multilevel politics. Second, this very influence is shaped by institutional-level factors in the form of specific characteristics of organizations regarding power distribution, effectiveness and norm diffusion, which meet the expectations emanating from individual-level attitudes.

Irrespectively of the cross-level links between the analysed variables and institutional characteristics, the clearest conclusion that can be drawn from the comparative case study is the complementarity of the two organizations. In this sense, the Committee and the Congress perform essential but separate tasks that contribute to the consolidation of multilevel politics. This does not necessarily imply that they should not try to improve on the institutional characteristics that have been discussed above as comparative advantages. CoR may decide to place more emphasis on the strengthening of subnational authorities while CLRAE may recognize more explicitly supranational integration as a facilitator of decentralization; or CoR may be reformed to allow more time to be spared for normative political debate among its members, while CLRAE may intensify its work and develop more effective mechanisms for its internal processes. Nonetheless, an optimum institutionalization of multilevel politics would require an equilibrium whereby duplicates and rivalry are avoided across institutions. The awareness about the distinctiveness of the two organizations, which was apparent in all the interviews, the history of coordination and cooperation between them, and the visible willingness to sustain these arrangements indicate that the future institutional developments are unlikely to disturb such an equilibrium.



# Conclusion

This thesis has offered a comprehensive institutional explanation for the possibility of transformation towards a multilevel political system. Beginning with the premise that the world political order is undergoing certain fundamental changes, which can be conceptualized as glocalization, cosmopolitan response to undemocratic effects of globalization, territorial rescaling or global governance, this study has set out the task of examining whether the conditions of such a transformation are being met. The review of the academic literature on related topics, discussed in Chapter 1, specifies the analytical focus of this thesis. As the theories of European integration envisage a certain degree of autonomous leverage for supranational institutions, a transformation towards multilevel politics should be expected from its institutionalization. In this respect, it is not a coincidence that a considerable part of the studies which take the European Union as an autonomous political entity depict it as one of multilevel governance.

Multilevel governance, or multilevel relations in general, render domestic and international spheres interlinked with manifestations in both. Institutional developments at the European level supply channels of multilevel relations while common trends in domestic institutional development lead to increased demand for these channels. As the common trends operate against the background of persisting variation, existing studies on multilevel governance mostly chose to emphasize the fuzziness of emerging practices, such as their diversity, complexity, spontaneity, etc. With an interest in institutionalization, the present study has instead chosen to focus on the institutions that embody the direct links between supranational and subnational levels, and proposed the Committee of the Regions and the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities as the crucial cases, as they minimize the interference from the national level. In contrast, the institutionally-focused studies of multilevel governance were at best concerned with explaining

institutional change itself, without explicit attention to the effects of emerging institutions. For this reason, the interactions between institutions and actors, and especially the influence of institutions on actors, have been put forward as a critical but relatively understudied feature of institutionalization, hence the analytical focus has been defined as the involvement of subnational actors in European institutions.

Chapter 2 proposes new institutionalism as a broad framework which provides a coherent theory of institutions, in terms of their origins, evolution and effects as interconnected aspects of institutionalization. The conformity of the institutions of multilevel politics to the theoretical premises of new institutionalism, as well as their embeddedness in the European institutional architecture, testify to the institutionalization of multilevel politics. Drawing on historical, rationalist and sociological variants of new institutionalism, it has been hypothesized that free standing influence of institutions, as well as attitudes favouring power redistribution across levels of government, material incentives of institutionalized political activity, and relevant political identities are aligned with attitudes favourably disposed to multilevel politics in general.

The empirical evidence needed to test these two sets of hypotheses call for observations of individual attitudes and institutional features, hence two levels of analysis, which shape the overall research design as one of mixed-method. With the motivation to observe variation at both levels, the research project has been divided into a Europe-wide survey involving subnational actors with varying degrees of relationship with European institutions, and a comparative case study of the Committee of the Regions (CoR) and the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities (CLRAE). The data collected through the survey provide a sufficient representation of European subnational political actors, reveal generally favourable attitudes towards multilevel politics as well as other posited factors, and confirm the hypothesized individual-level explanations when considered separately.

The empirical test of the overall argument at the individual level of analysis has been conducted through the multivariate statistical model discussed in Chapter 5. Considerations of goodness of fit statistics, conformity with methodological assumptions and sufficient control for country-level variation result in a model that includes all posited variables. In other words, according to the best model to explain the dependent variable and given the available data, all hypothesized



variables are relevant. Further examination of each variable also suggests that the survey data provide statistically significant evidence to confirm the majority of hypotheses, while sociological explanations are less convincing than political and rationalist accounts. Overall, drawing on the theoretical background and the collected data, it is argued that the direct influence of institutions over actors, as well as individual attitudes shaped according to the presumed functions of institutions are strongly linked to favourable views on multilevel politics.

Finally, the comparative analysis of the institutional characteristics of the Committee and the Congress has indicated a complementarity between them. First, a reassessment of the survey data with regard to these cases reveals no difference in quantitative terms, and this finding can be linked to the fact that both organizations serve the primary function of providing supranational fora for subnational actors as a fundamental feature of multilevel politics. Second, in view of the redistribution of competences, CoR focuses more on European integration and CLRAE on decentralization. Third, CoR clearly displays higher degrees of institutional effectiveness while CLRAE is stronger on the normative aspects of institutionalization. Given that these relative areas of strength and comparative advantage are not reflected in the quantitative measurement of corresponding variables for their respective members, the differences between the two organizations do not necessarily generate different expectations. Instead, they are better understood as responding to separate areas of expectations, but exerting similar degrees of direct influence.

In sum, multilevel politics can be said to be institutionalized through CoR and CLRAE alongside other formal and informal institutions, as actor-institution interactions align with individual attitudes and institutional characteristics favourable towards multilevel politics. Actors who are more under the influence of European institutions have more positive views on multilevel politics, and the functioning of CoR and CLRAE ensures the participation of subnational actors into supranational-level institutionalized political processes. Actors who favour European integration also favour multilevel politics, and CoR works for a stronger European level, while actors who favour decentralized domestic structures also favour multilevel politics, and the Congress works for stronger subnational authorities. Actors who find institutionalized activities more effective and want to access European resources have more positive views on multilevel politics, and

CoR offers a relatively high probability of making a real impact on the European legislation. Actors whose political identification challenges traditional norms of national primacy have more favourable views towards multilevel politics, and the Congress champions local and regional self-government as European values.

In this context, this thesis offers several broad findings on the institutionalization of multilevel politics, on the basis of an existing academic interest in multilevel relations, new-institutionalist theory, a multi-method approach, and a focus on two specific organizations. The conclusions that are offered here can inform future research and policy in terms of these constituent aspects of the thesis. For this purpose, the final paragraphs below will discuss the implications and limitations of this study for the concept of multilevel governance/politics, new-institutionalist theory, methodology, and policy.

**Conceptual implications** This thesis has discussed the concept of multilevel politics, defined as a system characterized by a web of horizontal and vertical relations within and across levels of decision making without the presumed primacy of any level. This conceptualization has in fact resulted from approaching the literature on multilevel governance from a novel perspective. Namely, the departure from the typical approaches to multilevel governance has been marked by two main motivations: first, not limiting the scope to the EU governance and extending it to other multilevel political activities, and second, prioritizing the search for common institutional patterns which will be better indicators of political-systemic change, as opposed to the tendency to emphasize the diversity, high complexity or unpredictability of the institutional forms of multilevel governance, or the complete lack thereof.

It should be noted that this choice of analytical interest is not meant to deny the general tendencies of the literature on multilevel governance, and this literature constitutes the main area to which this thesis is meant to offer new insights. It is obvious that multilevel governance within the contours of the EU constitutes the most pervasive form of multilevel relations in Europe, and, indeed, that it operates against the background of high institutional complexity and diversity. For this reason, the aim of this thesis is not to claim that the entire literature should be overhauled with the approach defended here, but instead to contribute such an approach to the literature as a previously overlooked aspect of multilevel political

relations. In this sense, the positive findings of the empirical research can also be taken as a confirmatory conclusion that the overall approach of this thesis has been worth the endeavour.

Regarding the conceptualization of multilevel politics as broadening multi-level governance, the following points can be noted: when the survey data are examined across institutions, no significant difference is observed in the institutional effects of the Committee and the Congress, or even other organizations; such a non-difference is explained by the case study with respect to overall commonalities as well as several aspects of complementarity; since this complementarity results from different institutional features of each organization, it is difficult to classify one as more important than the other. Regarding the institutional neatness versus fuzziness, the primary finding about a generic institutional influence is quite strong. This is especially true when this European-level institutional influence is compared to the state-level: cross-country variation constitutes a noticeable part of the overall variation explained by the statistical model, but it cannot rival or undermine the significance of the institutional variable. Moreover, further examinations failed to associate the cross-country variation to relevant national characteristics, suggesting that the influence of European-level institutions is not conditioned on certain domestic structures.

In view of the implications of conceptualizing multilevel politics, this thesis can offer new insights to the literature on multilevel governance and inform future research in the area, with respect to the two axes of how this conceptualization sought to modify multilevel governance: paying attention to the developments beyond the EU, while acknowledging that EU governance is probably the most significant aspect; and paying attention to common institutional patterns, while acknowledging that multilevel relations are necessarily characterized by diversity and complexity. Yet these conclusions are reached by focusing exclusively on the neat side of institutionalization; therefore, this study is not enough to extend these conclusions to how neatness weighs against the fuzziness of the institutionalization of multilevel politics. Moreover, data limitations, such as the small sizes of national sub-samples, also made it difficult to test country-level factors more rigorously. In this sense, possible improvements in the data quality would be one of the most useful steps forward regarding the question of common patterns of change and persisting variation in the background.

**Implications for new institutionalism** In addition to the academic literature on multilevel governance, this thesis is also capable of offering contributions to new institutionalism which laid the foundation of its theoretical framework. This framework is primarily characterized by an eclectic approach bringing together the three strands of new institutionalism with respect to their commonalities and complementarities. To begin with the commonalities, new institutionalism is based on the premise that institutions matter as they originate, evolve and affect actors. While it is taken as almost self-evident for the theory itself, this premise can be seen as relying entirely on counterfactuals from a critical perspective. Between these two extremes, one central theoretical contribution of this thesis is making ‘institutions matter’ an empirically testable claim. The positive findings from the empirical research should be interpreted in favour of new institutionalism, and its relevance for explaining political phenomena. Furthermore, since the primary independent variable of institutional influence is operationalized in a way that can be relevant for all strands, the same findings can also suggest the usefulness of an eclectic approach, when the analytical interest is in a generic category of institutions.

As for complementarities, more specific variables are derived from the three strands of new institutionalism, but their relative explanatory power in statistical analyses differ visibly. As discussed in the interpretation of the multivariate model, the most significant results are obtained from the variables on the distribution of competences across levels of governance, hence attributed to historical institutionalism. These are followed by the variables on material incentives and the effectiveness of institutional channels, hence rational choice. Meanwhile, the only failed hypotheses are related to certain types of political identification, derived from sociological approaches. In this respect, the overall usefulness of an eclectic approach is not necessarily translated into the individual strength of each component of the theory. Therefore, empirical research provides the strongest feedback to historical institutionalism, which is the most adept for explaining political questions, and the weakest feedback to sociological institutionalism.

Nonetheless, it should be remarked that the eclectic framework and the accompanying research design have come at the cost of departing from the distinctive features of each strand of new institutionalism. These are aligned together with the help of an attitudinal research design. With regard to historical and rational

choice institutionalisms, it meant empirical tests on the views on the distribution of competences and the effectiveness institutional mechanisms, rather than actual distribution and effectiveness. The departure is especially stark with regard to sociological institutionalism, since binary measurement of political identification can be seen as an oversimplification. In this sense, the relatively weaker results on sociological variables should not be interpreted as negative feedback on the unsimplified version of sociological institutionalism. In other words, the relative explanatory power of each component of the eclectic framework may not directly translate into the relevance of original new-institutionalist perspectives for multi-level politics.

While quantitative analyses can be used to assess the relative explanatory power of each strand of new institutionalism, qualitative analyses testify to their more equivalent complementarity. For instance, effectiveness comes to the fore in one case, but normative qualities come to the fore in the other. On one hand, different theoretical perspectives shed light on the complementarity of CoR and CLRAE; on the other hand, the co-existence of CoR and CLRAE shed light on the analytical complementarity of the three strands of new institutionalism. Furthermore, the specific value of a historical perspective and its capacity to provide a common ground for rational and cultural accounts can be established by linking this complementarity back to institutional origins and evolution. More specifically, the European and material orientations of CoR, and the subnational and normative orientations of CLRAE can be attributed to their origins and evolution, as well as those of the EU and the CoE.

In view of these contributions and limitations, this thesis can inform future institutionalist studies of multilevel politics in the following ways. Above all, due to the general concern with testing institutional effects here and the ensuing simplification, the distinctive features of the different types of new institutionalism can be reintroduced, with a higher confidence in the relevance of institutions that operate at European level. To improve the historical-institutionalist explanations, case studies can be helpful for understanding the actual power-distributional effects of the institutions of multilevel politics on subnational actors. To improve rationalist explanations, game-theoretical analyses of institutional mechanisms can be helpful for a more detailed account of the effectiveness that the institutions of multilevel politics can entail. To improve sociological explanations, the focus can

be shifted onto the socialization and legitimacy effects of institutions on actors, by designing qualitative interviews to ask questions about the actors themselves rather than the institutions, and possibly using other qualitative data collection methods such as ethnography.

**Methodological implications** While this thesis cannot be seen as a contribution to the methodology of political science as such, its multi-method research design, and in particular the quantitative component of this design can prove useful for the study of European politics. For political issues that are European in scope, quantitative data offer an expedient way of summarizing and analysing vast and diverse information through comprehensive models. However, analysing the behaviour of such a large group of political actors is often difficult due to the unavailability of quantitative data. For this reason, an important part of the research process was dedicated to survey design and implementation, and data preparation. Thanks to the widespread use of the internet, it has been possible to collect a reasonably representative dataset in a limited time and with limited resources. The fact that this dataset has been used successfully to test a series of hypotheses suggests that data collected from targeted groups of political actors could be a useful way of analysing questions concerning a large population.

Nonetheless, the representativeness of the sample is limited in several ways as discussed in the relevant chapters. The data and the analysis could be improved with a dataset containing more responses from each country and from more countries. This was primarily an obstacle against multilevel modelling which has been substituted by more rudimentary ways of controlling for country-level variance. Given that much of the argument has been developed with respect to the challenge posed to the primacy of the national level of government, the most imminent improvement to the statistical model would be a more exact measurement of the share of the variance explained by country-level factors. Furthermore, limitations of data may also have resulted in some inadequacies of the statistical tests, which are more likely to be Type II errors. In that sense, the low degree of confidence in the significance of sociological variables, as well as the conclusions drawn from the apparent lack of difference between CoR and CLRAE should be open to reinterpretation in case better-quality data yield different results.

More generally, the multi-method design offers valuable insights for questions which cannot be addressed solely through quantitative data and methods. This is especially true when institutional characteristics are an important part of the analysis, which means a small number of data points carrying in-depth information rather than a large number of data points carrying information simplified through quantification. In line with the implications discussed for new institutionalism, utilizing the relative merits of different methods and approaches will enrich the literature on multilevel politics.

**Political implications** Finally, the political implications of the findings of this research have to be discussed with caution. Conceptualizing multilevel politics as a systemic feature of European politics, and explaining its institutionalization through a theoretical framework which includes possible feedbacks to the political structure magnifies its importance to a certain extent. Furthermore, the use of data representing a large population and quantitative methods magnifies the confidence in the inferential strength of the analysis. Nonetheless, arguing that institutionalization drives a transformation towards multilevel politics is not meant to argue that European politics has become a multilevel system to completely replace old forms of politics, nor to predict that it will definitely become so in the foreseeable future. What this thesis has ultimately shown is that multilevel political practices have become an integral part of European politics, and this is an outcome difficult to reverse, as it has happened through institutionalization which entails entrenchment in the political system.

It may be true that the nation state has become too small for the big problems of life, and too big for the small problems of life, as noted in the opening statement of this thesis, and that world politics is moving towards a system which erodes the primacy of the nation state and links all levels of governance. This thesis has definitely found signs in that direction, and what these signs can suggest so far is a coexistence of old and new forms of governance and politics. This thesis has also found that such a transformation happens through institutionalization, and in return, institutionalization works through individual agency. Therefore, the primary political implication concerns the institutions examined here and subnational political actors across Europe.

Institutions of multilevel politics, particularly CoR and CLRAE, have already entrenched their status in European politics, and can be expected to continue to display self-asserting properties. However, institutional evolution follows the best use of available power and resources at the disposal of institutional actors. Given that these institutions begin with limited powers and resources, their prospects of assuming a central place of European politics are unlikely to happen in the foreseeable future. The first implication, therefore, is that sound strategies must take into account existing institutional capacities. Second, the comparative findings on the complementarity or comparative advantages of CoR and CLRAE suggest the adequacy of the cooperation and partnership between these organizations, which already has a long history. Within the complex web of multilevel political relations, institutional diversity is only natural and should be endorsed by actors. This idea does not have to be limited to CoR and CLRAE, and can be extended to smaller institutions of multilevel politics as well. Therefore, an additional layer of multilevel politics can be characterized by inter-institutional relations.



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# Appendix A

## Survey

This appendix presents the relevant information with regard to the design and the management of the survey, as discussed in the main chapters of the thesis. The contents can be described as the following:

**Pilot study** This section includes the regression output of two major models as anticipated in the pre-test stage of the survey research, which have been run on data collected from a separate sample.

**Sampling** This section includes subsections on three major stages of sampling procedures:

**Sampling frame** This subsection presents the figures related to the selection of clusters, the drawing of the sampling frame, and the eventual response rates.

**Response rate** This subsection presents figures related to possible factors which may influence response rates. It also describes the calculation of obtained numbers, and analyses the relationships among these factors.

**Weights** This subsection presents the calculation of weights in the full sample and according to the adjusted sample size, based on the representation of countries in the sample and their populations.

**Response collection** This section includes subsections on major aspects of survey management:

**Call for participation** This subsection presents the template of the e-mail invitation sent to potential respondents, that is, everyone included in the sampling frame.

**Questionnaire** This subsection includes the printed format of the questionnaire, covering 20 pages. Although the response collection was completely conducted online, the printed version is selected here to illustrate the questionnaire more accurately.

**Screenshots** This subsection includes two screenshots from two sample questions from the web-based questionnaire, one in English and one in French.

## A.1 Pilot study

**Table A.1:** Full models from pilot study

	DV: Views on MLP	
	Model I	Model II
Influence of transnational institutions	1.099 **	2.689 *
Views on the power of European institutions	0.133	0.125
Views on the power of SNAs	0.302 ***	0.266 **
Considering European funds as important	1.030	5.000
Views on the usefulness of IOs	0.383 ***	0.519
Considering IOs as effective	1.593	2.193
Considering direct channels as effective	1.047	
Considering national channels as effective	-0.046	
Self-identification as a European politician	3.494 ***	0.213
Self-identification as a National politician	-1.001	
Self-identification as a Local politician	-2.770	
Influence of TNOs × European funds		-1.808
Influence of TNOs × usefulness		-0.036
Influence of TNOs × effective IOs		-0.046
Influence of TNOs × European identity		1.137
Age (squared)	0.000	0.000
Gender: male	0.701	0.341
Education: higher	1.507	1.629
Ideological position (1-9 left-right scale)	-0.224	-0.228
Country: UK v. Ireland	-0.184	0.133
Constant	7.989 *	1.653
Observations	123	123
Adjusted $R^2$	0.519	0.513
Residual Std. Error	4.438	4.465
$F$ Statistic	9.213 ***	9.019 ***
	(df=16; 106)	(df=16; 106)

Note: \*\*\* $p < 0.001 < **p < 0.01 < *p < 0.05$

## A.2 Sampling

### A.2.1 The sampling frame and the sample

**Table A.2:** Figures on clustering, sampling frame and responses

Country	Cluster number guide	Targeted number of clusters	Clusters with available contact	Contacts through clusters	Contacts through TNOs	Total contact	Adjusted total contact*	Full responses	Response rate
Albania	5	10	0	0	8	8	7	2	28.57%
Andorra	1	1	0	0	4	4	4	0	0.00%
Armenia	5	7	0	0	8	8	7	0	0.00%
Austria	10	11	11	511	53	564	523	18	3.44%
Azerbaijan	5	6	0	0	12	12	11	1	9.09%
Belgium	10	16	16	661	41	702	651	45	6.91%
Bosnia	5	10	0	0	10	10	9	2	22.22%
Bulgaria	10	13	9	196	38	234	217	2	0.92%
Croatia	10	12	11	194	41	235	218	15	6.88%
Cyprus	5	4	1	19	18	37	34	1	2.94%
Czech R.	10	10	10	546	36	582	540	10	1.85%
Denmark	10	10	10	395	35	430	399	21	5.26%
Estonia	5	6	6	136	25	161	149	10	6.71%
Finland	10	16	11	571	48	619	574	13	2.26%
France	20	31	8	771	94	865	802	40	4.99%
Georgia	5	2	0	0	8	8	7	1	14.29%
Germany	20	21	19	1746	122	1868	1732	92	5.31%
Greece	10	19	6	62	39	101	94	5	5.32%
Hungary	10	12	6	114	38	152	141	0	0.00%
Iceland	1	1	1	15	7	22	20	3	15.00%
Ireland	10	10	10	380	25	405	376	27	7.18%
Italy	20	26	26	1131	99	1230	1141	47	4.12%
Latvia	5	9	4	66	25	91	84	1	1.19%
Liechtenstein	1	1	1	13	4	17	16	0	0.00%
Lithuania	5	6	6	212	27	239	222	7	3.15%
Luxembourg	1	1	1	28	17	45	42	3	7.14%
Macedonia	5	2	0	0	16	16	15	0	0.00%
Malta	1	1	1	1	17	18	17	3	17.65%
Moldova	5	9	1	33	0	33	31	0	0.00%
Monaco	1	1	0	0	4	4	4	0	0.00%
Montenegro	5	6	0	0	6	6	6	0	0.00%
Netherlands	15	15	15	808	43	851	789	40	5.07%
Norway	10	21	20	940	20	960	890	44	4.94%
Poland	20	19	10	443	77	520	482	4	0.83%
Portugal	10	12	3	31	42	73	68	7	10.29%
Romania	15	18	4	132	53	185	172	2	1.16%
Russia	20	26	12	564	38	602	558	4	0.72%
San Marino	1	1	0	0	4	4	4	0	0.00%
Serbia	5	7	0	0	12	12	11	1	9.09%
Slovakia	10	10	9	449	28	477	442	12	2.71%
Slovenia	5	5	2	52	17	69	64	4	6.25%
Spain	20	21	9	631	94	725	672	25	3.72%
Sweden	10	15	11	888	42	930	862	43	4.99%
Switzerland	10	17	16	1682	13	1695	1562	150	9.60%
Turkey	20	23	0	0	21	21	19	0	0.00%
Ukraine	20	25	0	0	23	23	21	1	4.76%
United Kingdom	20	33	31	2311	95	2406	2231	96	4.30%
<b>Total</b>	<b>437</b>	<b>558</b>	<b>317</b>	<b>16732</b>	<b>1547</b>	<b>18279</b>	<b>16940</b>	<b>802</b>	<b>4.73%</b>

*Note:* \* Final number of total contacts is calculated by multiplying the raw number of total contacts with 0.9274 and rounding off the product. This adjustment is needed to reflect the elimination of duplicates and undelivered invitations.



## A.2.2 Response rate

**Table A.3:** Possible factors influencing response rate

Country	Response rate	Contacts from TNO/cluster	Rate of contactability	Availability of official languages	Availability of known languages
Albania	0.29	9.00	0.00	0	0.65
Andorra	0.00	5.00	0.00	1	1.00
Armenia	0.00	9.00	0.00	0	0.85
Austria	0.03	0.11	1.00	1	1.00
Azerbaijan	0.09	13.00	0.00	0	0.35
Belgium	0.07	0.06	1.00	1	1.00
Bosnia	0.22	11.00	0.00	0	0.45
Bulgaria	0.01	0.20	0.69	0	0.25
Croatia	0.07	0.22	0.92	0	0.49
Cyprus	0.03	0.95	0.25	0	0.73
Czech Republic	0.02	0.07	1.00	0	0.27
Denmark	0.05	0.09	1.00	0	0.86
Estonia	0.07	0.19	1.00	0	0.56
Finland	0.02	0.09	0.69	0	0.70
France	0.05	0.12	0.26	1	1.00
Georgia	0.14	9.00	0.00	0	0.70
Germany	0.05	0.07	0.90	1	1.00
Greece	0.05	0.63	0.32	0	0.51
Hungary	0.00	0.34	0.50	0	0.20
Iceland	0.15	0.50	1.00	0	0.90
Ireland	0.07	0.07	1.00	1	1.00
Italy	0.04	0.09	1.00	1	1.00
Latvia	0.01	0.39	0.44	0	0.67
Liechtenstein	0.00	0.36	1.00	1	1.00
Lithuania	0.03	0.13	1.00	0	0.80
Luxembourg	0.07	0.62	1.00	1	1.00
Macedonia	0.00	17.00	0.00	0	0.50
Malta	0.18	9.00	1.00	1	0.89
Moldova	0.00	0.03	0.11	0	0.50
Monaco	0.00	5.00	0.00	1	1.00
Montenegro	0.00	7.00	0.00	0	0.50
Netherlands	0.05	0.05	1.00	0	0.90
Norway	0.05	0.02	0.95	0	0.90
Poland	0.01	0.18	0.53	0	0.34
Portugal	0.10	1.34	0.25	0	0.27
Romania	0.01	0.41	0.22	0	0.31
Russia	0.01	0.07	0.46	1	1.00
San Marino	0.00	5.00	0.00	1	1.00
Serbia	0.09	13.00	0.00	0	0.45
Slovakia	0.03	0.06	0.90	0	0.26
Slovenia	0.06	0.34	0.40	0	0.59
Spain	0.04	0.15	0.43	1	1.00
Sweden	0.05	0.05	0.73	0	0.86
Switzerland	0.10	0.01	0.94	1	1.00
Turkey	0.00	22.00	0.00	0	0.17
Ukraine	0.05	24.00	0.00	0	0.83
United Kingdom	0.04	0.04	0.94	1	1.00
Mean	0.05	3.53	0.53	34%	0.71
Std. Dev.	0.06	6.03	0.42	N/A	0.28

Values in Table A.3 are obtained by the following methods:

Response rate	The ratio of the number of full responses over adjusted total number of contacts
Contacts from TNO/Cluster	The ratio of the number of contacts from transnational organizations over those from subnational clusters
Rate of contactability	The ratio of the number of contacted clusters over targeted number of clusters
Availability of official languages	Whether or not the questionnaire is available in at least one official language of the country
Availability of known languages	The percentage of people competent in the most widely spoken second language in each country; relying on cross-national surveys where available or national estimations; assuming 100% for the countries with one official language available

**Table A.4:** Correlations among possible sources of response rate

	Response rate	TNO/Cluster	Contactability	Language availability
Response rate	1.00			
TNO/Cluster	0.18	1.00		
Contactability	0.02	-0.64 ***	1.00	
Language availability	0.03	-0.24	0.32 *	1.00
Official language (mean difference)	-0.01	-2.92	0.23 .	

*Note:* \*\*\* $p < 0.001$  < \*\* $p < 0.01$  < \* $p < 0.05$  < .  $p < 0.1$

## A.2.3 Weights

Table A.5: Calculation of weights

Country	N in sample	Population	Full sample size			Adjusted sample size			Weights
			Percentage of sample	Percentage of population	Over-/Under-representation	Percentage of sample	Percentage of population	Over-/Under-representation	
Albania	2	2887000	0.25%	0.40%	-0.15%	1.59			1.00
Austria	18	8608000	2.24%	1.18%	1.06%	0.53	2.31%	0.37%	0.84
Azerbaijan	1	9651000	0.12%	1.33%	-1.20%	10.65			1.00
Belgium	45	11259000	5.61%	1.55%	4.06%	0.28	5.77%	3.24%	0.44
Bosnia	2	3750000	0.25%	0.52%	-0.27%	2.07			1.00
Bulgaria	2	7185000	0.25%	0.99%	-0.74%	3.96			1.00
Croatia	15	4230000	1.87%	0.58%	1.29%	0.31	1.92%	0.97%	0.49
Cyprus	1	876000	0.12%	0.12%	0.00%	0.97			1.00
Czech Republic	10	10535000	1.25%	1.45%	-0.20%	1.16	1.28%	-1.09%	1.85
Denmark	21	5673000	2.62%	0.78%	1.84%	0.30	2.69%	1.42%	0.47
Estonia	10	1315000	1.25%	0.18%	1.07%	0.15	1.28%	0.99%	0.23
Finland	13	5475000	1.62%	0.75%	0.87%	0.46	1.67%	0.43%	0.74
France	40	66121000	4.99%	9.10%	-4.11%	1.82	5.13%	-9.75%	2.90
Georgia	1	3707000	0.12%	0.51%	-0.39%	4.09			1.00
Germany	92	81276000	11.47%	11.18%	0.29%	0.97	11.79%	-6.49%	1.55
Greece	5	10769000	0.62%	1.48%	-0.86%	2.38	0.64%	-1.78%	3.78
Iceland	3	331000	0.37%	0.05%	0.33%	0.12	0.38%	0.31%	0.19
Ireland	27	4630000	3.37%	0.64%	2.73%	0.19	3.46%	1.04%	0.30
Italy	47	60963000	5.86%	8.39%	-2.53%	1.43	6.03%	-7.69%	2.28
Latvia	1	1979000	0.12%	0.27%	-0.15%	2.18			1.00
Lithuania	7	2906000	0.87%	0.40%	0.47%	0.46	0.90%	0.24%	0.73
Luxembourg	3	570000	0.37%	0.08%	0.30%	0.21	0.38%	0.26%	0.33
Malta	3	425000	0.37%	0.06%	0.32%	0.16	0.38%	0.29%	0.25
Netherlands	40	16933000	4.99%	2.33%	2.66%	0.47	5.13%	1.32%	0.74
Norway	44	5194000	5.49%	0.71%	4.77%	0.13	5.64%	4.47%	0.21
Poland	4	38494000	0.50%	5.30%	-4.80%	10.62			1.00
Portugal	7	10311000	0.87%	1.42%	-0.55%	1.63	0.90%	-1.42%	2.58
Romania	2	19822000	0.25%	2.73%	-2.48%	10.94			1.00
Russia	4	144031000	0.50%	19.82%	-19.32%	39.73			1.00
Serbia	1	7103000	0.12%	0.98%	-0.85%	7.84			1.00
Slovakia	12	5426000	1.50%	0.75%	0.75%	0.50	1.54%	0.32%	0.79
Slovenia	4	2065000	0.50%	0.28%	0.21%	0.57	0.51%	0.05%	0.91
Spain	25	46335000	3.12%	6.37%	-3.26%	2.05	3.21%	-7.22%	3.25
Sweden	43	9794000	5.36%	1.35%	4.01%	0.25	5.51%	3.31%	0.40
Switzerland	150	8265000	18.70%	1.14%	17.57%	0.06	19.23%	17.37%	0.10
Ukraine	1	42850000	0.12%	5.90%	-5.77%	47.28			1.00
United Kingdom	96	65081000	11.97%	8.95%	3.02%	0.75	12.31%	-2.33%	1.19
Full total	802	726825000							
Adjusted total	780	444490000							

## A.3 Response collection

### A.3.1 Call for participation

E-mail template for the invitation sent to potential participants:

Subject line Research on local and regional politics

Mail body Dear (Title) (Name),

I am writing to invite you to participate in a survey for my research on local and regional authorities. Different language options are available: (list of languages with original names).

I am a Ph.D. candidate in the University of Cambridge, conducting research on the role of local and regional authorities in European institutions. An essential input for my research is politicians' views on related political issues, and contributions from (Locality/Delegation), (Country/Organizations) will be extremely valuable.

If you have a few minutes to spare of your time, I would like to ask you to answer some questions via the following link:

(URL link to the questionnaire)

The questionnaire is hosted on a special and secure website, it takes approximately 10 minutes, and the answers are completely anonymous. You can find more information about the research and confidentiality on the first page of the questionnaire.

If you have any queries, please do not hesitate to contact me on (e-mail address), or by simply replying to this message. Many thanks.

Best regards

(Signature)

(Institutional affiliation)

(Contact information)

### A.3.2 Questionnaire: printed format

#### Survey on the Role of Local and Regional Actors in European Politics

**About the questionnaire**

This questionnaire is intended to be used for the doctoral research project conducted by Rusen Yasar (Ph.D. Candidate at the University of Cambridge, Department of Politics and International Studies and King's College, contact: {e-mail address}). The project explores the place of local and regional authorities in European politics and the functioning of international organizations in which they participate.

Your participation will be very much appreciated and will contribute to the better understanding of local and regional dimensions of European and domestic politics which are usually overlooked.

Completing the questionnaire will take approximately 10 minutes. There will be four types of questions: on your local or regional unit, on your views on several political issues, on your international experience, and on some personal information. The answers are completely anonymous, the only information which will be associated with the questionnaire is the date and time of submission.

You can answer by putting an "X" or any mark into the relevant boxes and by typing where required. In case you do not want to respond to any of the questions, you can choose the "refuse to reply" option, or simply leave the question blank.

You can start with the section 1 on page 2, after the confidentiality notice. Thank you for your time!

**Confidentiality Notice**

The research and the researcher are bound by the ethical rules of the University of Cambridge and the academic discipline of Political Science. The research is also subject to ethical review by the University Ethics Committee. Via the following links you can access some guideline documents for research ethics that will apply:

- University of Cambridge ethical rules:

{URL}

- Economic and Social Research Council (UK) framework of research ethics:

{URL}

- American Political Science Association ethics guidelines:

{URL}

Accordingly, the information you provide will be stored in a password-protected hard drive and secure cloud storage, and it will be processed anonymously and with utmost confidentiality. The data will be analysed with a view to contributing to a doctoral thesis and other academic publications that may ensue. If any participant believes that the dataset includes information that could reveal his/her identity, necessary corrections will be made to his/her satisfaction. The participants' right to opt out is inalienable at any time.

**Section 1: Some basic information about your local or regional unit****Question 1.** In which country is your local or regional unit located?
**Question 2.** Which one of the following best describes the type of your local or regional unit?

- ☐ Local government: city, town, commune, municipality, county, etc.
- ☐ Region with administrative powers: province, region, etc.
- ☐ Region with legislative powers: land, canton, autonomous region/community, etc.
- ☐ Other: *(please indicate)*

**Question 3.** What is the approximate population of your local or regional unit?
**Question 4.** What is your position in this local or regional unit?

- ☐ Head of government, mayor, or equivalent
- ☐ Vice-president, deputy mayor, ministerial position, or equivalent
- ☐ Councillor or member of assembly/parliament
- ☐ Consultant, member of staff, secretary, personal assistant, or similar
- ☐ Other: *(please indicate)*
- ☐ Refuse to reply

**Question 5.** Which political party are you a member of?
**Question 6.** Has your local or regional unit received financial support from European organizations?

- ☐ No, it has never received financial support.
- ☐ Not now, but it received financial support in the past.
- ☐ Not now, but it will receive financial support in the near future.
- ☐ Yes, it is currently receiving financial support.
- ☐ I don't know.

-----Please continue to the next section-----

### **Section 2: Your opinions about some aspects of European politics**

**Question 7.** For some observers, national governments are no longer the only dominant actors in international relations. Could you please state to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements?

	Completely disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither disagree nor agree	Somewhat agree	Completely agree	No opinion/ Refuse to reply
Local and regional authorities should be among the main actors of European politics.						
For local and regional authorities it is important to have direct relations with similar authorities from other countries.						
For local and regional authorities it is important to be represented in international organizations.						
Local and regional authorities should be recognized as actors in international law						
External relations of local and regional authorities should not be obstructed by national constraints.						

**Question 8.** The sharing of powers between European institutions and member states has led to many discussions. In your opinion, how powerful should European institutions be in different policy areas and overall?

	Very weak	Somewhat weak	Neither weak nor powerful	Somewhat powerful	Very powerful	No opinion/ Refuse to reply
Social policy: education, health, pensions, etc.						
Economic policy: trade, development, market regulation, etc.						
Internal affairs: immigration, security, etc.						
Foreign affairs: international cooperation, agreements, diplomacy etc.						
Overall						

**Question 9.** In recent years, the concepts of 'multi-level governance' and 'subsidiarity' have been put forward to support the place of local and regional authorities in European politics. What is your opinion about these concepts?

	Very negative	Somewhat negative	Neither negative nor positive	Somewhat positive	Very positive	No opinion/ Refuse to reply
Multilevel governance						
Subsidiarity						



**Question 10.** The sharing of competences between national governments and local and regional authorities varies to a great extent across countries. In your opinion, domestically how powerful should local and regional authorities be in different policy areas and overall?

	Very weak	Somewhat weak	Neither weak nor powerful	Somewhat powerful	Very powerful	No opinion/ Refuse to reply
Social policy: education, health, pensions, etc.						
Economic policy: trade, development, market regulation, etc.						
Internal affairs: immigration, security, etc.						
Foreign affairs: international cooperation, agreements, diplomacy etc.						
Overall						

**Question 11.** Federal and decentralized-unitary structures are two alternatives to centralized decision-making. What is your opinion about these principles?

	Very negative	Somewhat negative	Neither negative nor positive	Somewhat positive	Very positive	No opinion/ Refuse to reply
Federalism						
Decentralization						

**Question 12.** Local and regional authorities may use a variety of ways to conduct external relations. Do you think that the following options are effective methods of conducting external relations?

	No	Yes
Representation in an international organization		
Direct relations with local and regional authorities from other countries		
Participation in diplomatic missions or delegations of national governments		

**Question 13.** International and transnational organizations may or may not be beneficial for local and regional authorities. Moreover, one may expect different types of benefits from these organizations. In your opinion, how useful are existing international and transnational organizations for your local or regional authority?

	Very useless	Somewhat useless	Neither useless nor useful	Somewhat useful	Very useful	No opinion/ Refuse to reply
Economic: e.g. trade, investment, access to funds						
Political: e.g. influencing decision-making at national and European levels						
Cultural: e.g. working with people with the same ethnic background, religious affiliation						

**Question 14.** In your opinion, how important are European funds for local and regional development?

<input type="checkbox"/>	Very important
<input type="checkbox"/>	Somewhat important
<input type="checkbox"/>	Not very important
<input type="checkbox"/>	Not important at all
<input type="checkbox"/>	No opinion / Refuse to reply

-----Please continue to the next section-----

**Section 3: About your experience in international and transnational organizations**

*Please continue to the relevant section depending on your answer to the following question.*

**Question 15.** Have you represented your local or regional authority in an international or transnational organization?

- |                          |  |
|--------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | No.<br><i>Please continue to the section 3A on the next page</i>   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Yes. In two or more different international/transnational organizations.<br><i>Please continue to the section 3B on page 9</i> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Yes. In the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities.<br><i>Please continue to the section 3C on page 10</i>                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Yes. In the Committee of the Regions.<br><i>Please continue to the section 3D on page 12</i>                                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Yes. In another international or transnational organization<br><i>Please continue to the section 3E on page 14</i>             |

**Section 3A: Your opinions about international and transnational organizations**

**Question 16.** Is your local or regional government being represented in an international or transnational organization?

- ☐ No.
- ☐ Yes.
- ☐ I don't know.

**Question 17.** How much do you know about organizations which represent local and regional authorities at European level?

- ☐ I don't know anything about them
- ☐ I know a little about them
- ☐ I know a reasonable amount about them
- ☐ I know a lot about them
- ☐ I know everything about them
- ☐ Refuse to reply

**Question 18.** If you had the opportunity to represent your local or regional authority in an international or transnational organisation, how motivated would you be to take on this position?

- ☐ Not motivated at all
- ☐ Somewhat unmotivated
- ☐ Neither unmotivated nor motivated
- ☐ Somewhat motivated
- ☐ Very motivated
- ☐ Refuse to reply

**Question 19.** What is your opinion about the future of transnational organizations which represent local and regional authorities at European level?

- ☐ They should become as powerful as other international organizations
- ☐ They should remain in their current status and powers
- ☐ They should be reduced in competences or dissolved
- ☐ Refuse to reply

-----Please skip to the section 4 on page 16-----

**Section 3B: About multiple organizations which you have been a member of**

**Question 34.** Which organizations have been a member of? *Please tick as many as applies.*

<input type="checkbox"/>	Congress of Local and Regional Authorities
<input type="checkbox"/>	Committee of the Regions
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other: (please indicate) <input type="text"/>

**Question 35.** In total, what is the duration of your experience in these organizations?

<input type="checkbox"/>	6 months or less
<input type="checkbox"/>	Between 6 months and 12 months
<input type="checkbox"/>	Between 1 year and 2 years
<input type="checkbox"/>	Between 2 years and 4 years
<input type="checkbox"/>	4 years or more

**Question 36.** Your experience in which one of these organizations has been more significant than others?

*Please select one and continue to the relevant section based on your selection.*

<input type="checkbox"/>	Congress of Local and Regional Authorities <i>Please skip to the section 3C on page 10</i>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Committee of the Regions <i>Please skip to the section 3D on page 12</i>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other: (please indicate) <input type="text"/> <i>Please skip to the section 3E on page 14</i>

**Section 3C: About your experience in the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities (CLRAE)**

**Question 20.** Are you currently a member of CLRAE, or were you a member in the past?

- ☐ I am currently a member.
- ☐ I was a member in the past.

**Question 21.** How long have you been, or were you, a member of CLRAE?

- ☐ 6 months or less
- ☐ Between 6 months and 12 months
- ☐ Between 1 year and 2 years
- ☐ Between 2 years and 4 years
- ☐ 4 years or more

**Question 22.** Which one of the following expressions best describes your experience in CLRAE?

- ☐ Very unsatisfying
- ☐ Somewhat unsatisfying
- ☐ Neither unsatisfying nor satisfying
- ☐ Somewhat satisfying
- ☐ Very satisfying
- ☐ Refuse to reply

**Question 23.** Personally, how important is/was it for you to be a member of CLRAE?

- ☐ Very unimportant
- ☐ Somewhat unimportant
- ☐ Neither unimportant nor important
- ☐ Somewhat important
- ☐ Very important
- ☐ Refuse to reply

**Question 24.** In your opinion, how accurate are the following statements to describe the importance of CLRAE?

	Very inaccurate	Somewhat inaccurate	Neither inaccurate nor accurate	Somewhat accurate	Very accurate	No opinion/ Refuse to reply
It helps the economic development of local and regional authorities						
It makes local and regional authorities politically more powerful						
It promotes decentralization and local democracy						
It promotes multi-level governance and subsidiarity						

**Question 25.** What is your opinion about the future of CLRAE?

- ☐ It should become as powerful as other bodies of the Council of Europe
- ☐ It should remain in their current status and powers
- ☐ It should be reduced in competences or dissolved
- ☐ Refuse to reply

**Question 26.** When you have voted in plenary sessions, how significant have the following factors been in influencing your decisions?

	Very insignificant	Somewhat insignificant	Neither insignificant nor significant	Somewhat significant	Very significant	No opinion/ Refuse to reply
The preparatory work done by the relevant committee / commission						
The position of my national delegation						
The position of my party group						
The interests of my local/regional unit						

-----Please skip to the section 4 on page 16-----

**Section 3D: About your experience in the Committee of the Regions (CoR)**

**Question 27.** Are you currently a member of CoR, or were you a member in the past?

- ☐ I am currently a member.
- ☐ I was a member in the past.

**Question 28.** How long have you been, or were you, a member of CoR?

- ☐ 6 months or less
- ☐ Between 6 months and 12 months
- ☐ Between 1 year and 2 years
- ☐ Between 2 years and 4 years
- ☐ 4 years or more

**Question 29.** Which one of the following expressions best describes your experience in CoR?

- ☐ Very unsatisfying
- ☐ Somewhat unsatisfying
- ☐ Neither unsatisfying nor satisfying
- ☐ Somewhat satisfying
- ☐ Very satisfying
- ☐ Refuse to reply

**Question 30.** Personally, how important is/was it for you to be a member of CoR?

- ☐ Very unimportant
- ☐ Somewhat unimportant
- ☐ Neither unimportant nor important
- ☐ Somewhat important
- ☐ Very important
- ☐ Refuse to reply



**Question 31.** In your opinion, how accurate are the following statements to describe the importance of CoR?

	Very inaccurate	Somewhat inaccurate	Neither inaccurate nor accurate	Somewhat accurate	Very accurate	No opinion/ Refuse to reply
It helps the economic development of local and regional authorities						
It makes local and regional authorities politically more powerful						
It promotes decentralization and local democracy						
It promotes multi-level governance and subsidiarity						

**Question 32.** What is your opinion about the future of CoR?

- ☐ It should become as powerful as other bodies of European Union
- ☐ It should remain in their current status and powers
- ☐ It should be reduced in competences or dissolved
- ☐ Refuse to reply

**Question 33.** When you have voted in plenary sessions, how significant have the following factors been in influencing your decisions?

	Very insignificant	Somewhat insignificant	Neither insignificant nor significant	Somewhat significant	Very significant	No opinion/ Refuse to reply
The preparatory work done by the relevant committee / commission						
The position of my national delegation						
The position of my party group						
The interests of my local/regional unit						

-----Please skip to the section 4 on page 16-----

**Section 3E: About your experience in this transnational organization**

**Question 37.** Are you currently a member of this organization, or were you a member in the past?

- ☐ I am currently a member.
- ☐ I was a member in the past.

**Question 38.** How long have you been, or were you, a member of this organization?

- ☐ 6 months or less
- ☐ Between 6 months and 12 months
- ☐ Between 1 year and 2 years
- ☐ Between 2 years and 4 years
- ☐ 4 years or more

**Question 39.** Which one of the following expressions best describes your experience in this organization?

- ☐ Very unsatisfying
- ☐ Somewhat unsatisfying
- ☐ Neither unsatisfying nor satisfying
- ☐ Somewhat satisfying
- ☐ Very satisfying
- ☐ Refuse to reply

**Question 40.** Personally, how important is/was it for you to be a member of this organization?

- ☐ Very unimportant
- ☐ Somewhat unimportant
- ☐ Neither unimportant nor important
- ☐ Somewhat important
- ☐ Very important
- ☐ Refuse to reply

**Question 41.** In your opinion, how accurate are the following statements to describe the importance of this organization?

	Very inaccurate	Somewhat inaccurate	Neither inaccurate nor accurate	Somewhat accurate	Very accurate	No opinion/ Refuse to reply
It helps the economic development of local and regional authorities						
It makes local and regional authorities politically more powerful						
It promotes decentralization and local democracy						
It promotes multi-level governance and subsidiarity						

**Question 42.** What is your opinion about the future of this organization?

- ☐ It should become as powerful as other international organizations
- ☐ It should remain in their current status and powers
- ☐ It should be reduced in competences or dissolved
- ☐ Refuse to reply

-----Please continue to the next section-----

**Section 4: About your experience in external offices**

*Please continue to the relevant section depending on your answer to the following question.*

**Question 43.** Have you worked in an external office of your local or regional authority outside of your home country?

<input type="checkbox"/>	No. <i>Please continue to the section 4A on page 17</i>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes. In an office in Brussels or Strasbourg. <i>Please continue to the section 4B on page 18</i>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes. In an office based in the area of a partner government. <i>Please continue to the section 4B on page 18</i>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes, other: (please indicate) <input type="text"/> <i>Please continue to the section 4B on page 18</i>

**Section 4A: Your opinions about external offices**

**Question 44.** Does your local or regional authority have an external office outside of your home country?

- |                          |               |
|--------------------------|---------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | No.           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Yes.          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | I don't know. |

**Question 45.** How much do you know about offices which local and regional authorities have in foreign countries?

- |                          |                                       |
|--------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | I don't know anything about them      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | I know a little about them            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | I know a reasonable amount about them |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | I know a lot about them               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | I know everything about them          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Refuse to reply                       |

**Question 46.** If you had the opportunity to work in an external office of your local or regional authority, how motivated would you be to take on this position?

- |                          |                                   |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Not motivated at all              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Somewhat unmotivated              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Neither unmotivated nor motivated |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Somewhat motivated                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Very motivated                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Refuse to reply                   |

-----Please skip to the section 5-----

**Section 4B: About your experience in this external office**

**Question 47.** Are you currently working in this office, or did you work there in the past?

- ☐ I am currently working
- ☐ I worked in the past

**Question 48.** How long have you worked, or did you work, in this office?

- ☐ 6 months or less
- ☐ Between 6 months and 12 months
- ☐ Between 1 year and 2 years
- ☐ Between 2 years and 4 years
- ☐ 4 years or more

**Question 49.** Which one of the following best describes your experience in this office?

- ☐ Very unsatisfying
- ☐ Somewhat unsatisfying
- ☐ Neither unsatisfying nor satisfying
- ☐ Somewhat satisfying
- ☐ Very satisfying
- ☐ Refuse to reply

**Question 50.** Personally, how important is it for you to work outside of your home country?

- ☐ Very unimportant
- ☐ Somewhat unimportant
- ☐ Neither unimportant nor important
- ☐ Somewhat important
- ☐ Very important
- ☐ Refuse to reply

-----Please continue to the next and final section-----

**Section 5: Finally some personal information about yourself****Question 51.** Which country are you from?

--

**Question 52.** How old are you?

--

**Question 53.** What is your gender?

<input type="checkbox"/>	Female
<input type="checkbox"/>	Male
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other
<input type="checkbox"/>	Refuse to reply

**Question 54.** What is the highest level of education you have completed?

<input type="checkbox"/>	Primary or secondary education
<input type="checkbox"/>	University - undergraduate or equivalent
<input type="checkbox"/>	University - postgraduate
<input type="checkbox"/>	Refuse to reply

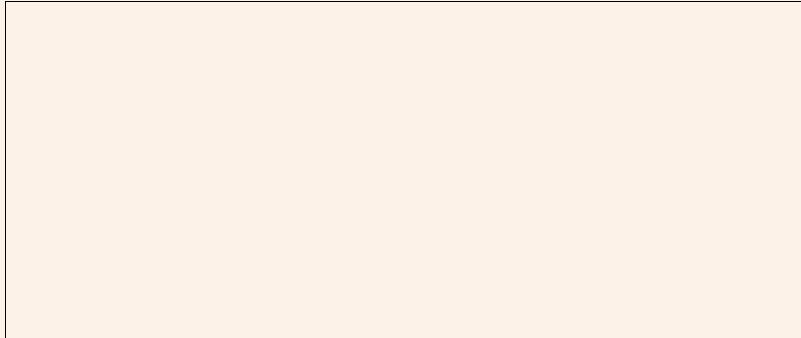
**Question 55.** On a scale from 1 to 9, how would you define political position?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

**Question 56.** Would you describe yourself with each of the following statements?

	No	Yes
A politician of your locality or region		
A politician of your country or nation-state		
A European politician		
A politician of your ethnic, religious or cultural group		
A politician of your political party or ideology		

If you have any other information or comment that you would like to share with us, please feel free to use the box below.



Thank you very much for taking the time to complete the questionnaire. If you have any queries, please do not hesitate to contact me on {e-mail address}. You can change your responses or withdraw from the survey at any time.



### A.3.3 Screenshots from web-based questionnaire

**Figure A.1:** Screenshot from web-based questionnaire, sample in English

Survey on the Role of Local and Regional Actors in European Politics
Home
Survey
Contact

52 % completed, section 3 of 4

## About your experience in international and transnational organizations

ⓘ Depending on your reply to the following question, you will be directed to specific questions.

Have you represented your local or regional authority in an international or transnational organization?

☐ No.

☐ Yes, in the Congress of Local or Regional Authorities

☐ Yes, in the Committee of the Regions

☐ Yes, in two or more different international/transnational organizations

☐ Yes, in another international/transnational organization :

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**Figure A.2:** Screenshot from web-based questionnaire, sample in French

**Enquête sur le rôle des pouvoirs locaux et régionaux dans les institutions européennes**

Accueil   Enquête   Contact

### Le partage des pouvoirs entre les institutions européennes et les états membres a entraîné beaucoup de débats. A votre avis, à quel point les institutions européennes doivent-elles être puissantes ou faibles dans divers domaines politiques et en général ?

	Très faibles	Plutôt faibles	Ni faibles ni puissantes	Plutôt puissantes	Très puissantes	Pas d'opinion / Refuser de répondre
La politique sociale: éducation, santé publique, retraite, etc.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
La politique économique: commerce, développement, réglementation du marché, etc.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
La politique intérieure: immigration, sécurité, etc.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
La politique étrangère: coopération internationale, accords internationaux, diplomatie, etc.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
En général	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>



# Appendix B

## Regression diagnostics

This appendix presents the procedures of regression diagnostics which were taken into account during model specification and respecification. As discussed in the main chapters of the thesis, diagnostics are examined in three groups: influential observations, independent linear relationships, and normal and homoskedastic distribution of residuals. The improvements provided by dropping the influential observations is illustrated in relevant sections.

**Influential observations** This section includes a table displaying unusually high observations (in terms of Cook's distance). The section also includes charts which represent high influence, and the relationships among residuals, leverage and influence, before and after adjustment.

**Linear relationship** This section includes a table displaying the variance inflation factors which are used to examine multicollinearity, by also taking into account the number of categories of categorical variables. Individual linear relationships are not presented in this appendix, as they are discussed in the main chapters of the thesis.

**Heteroskedasticity** This section presents charts and statistical tests related to the distribution of residuals in two models. The charts in the top rows of the figures are used to examine the normality of the distribution of residuals. The charts in

the bottom rows are used to examine the change in the variance of these distributions with respect to the fitted values. The figures are accompanied by the results of Breusch-Pagan tests, which determine the statistical significance of the level of heteroskedasticity.

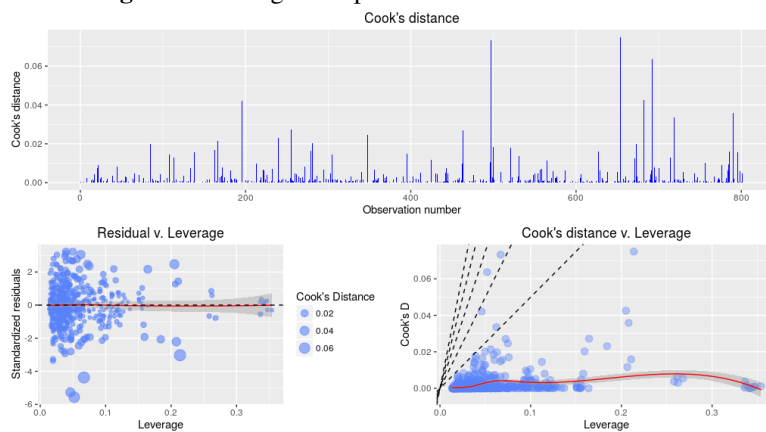
## B.1 Influential observations

**Table B.1:** Observations with relatively high influence

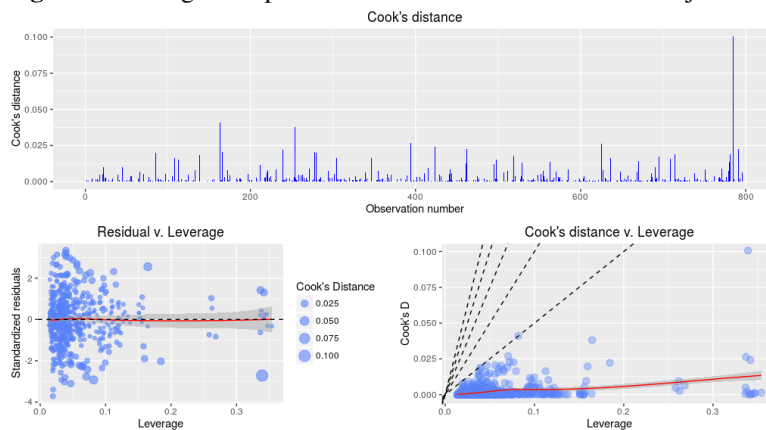
Observation no	Stud. Residual	Hat values	Cook's distance
196	-5.36 ***	0.05	0.04
497	-4.43 **	0.07	0.07
654	-3.04	0.21	0.07
682	2.48	0.21	0.04
692	-5.68 ***	0.05	0.06

*Note:* \*\*\* $p < 0.001$  < \*\* $p < 0.01$  (Bonferroni)

**Figure B.1:** Diagnostic plots of influential observations



**Figure B.2:** Diagnostic plots of influential observations after adjustment



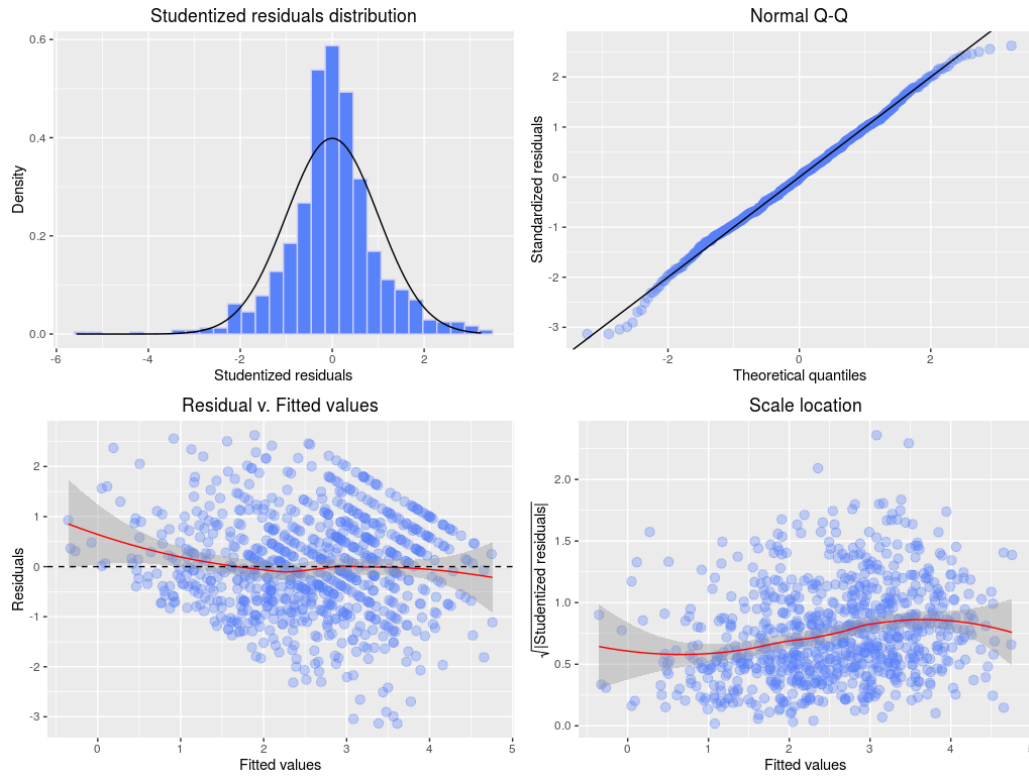
## B.2 Linear relationship

**Table B.2:** Variance inflation factors

	<i>VIF</i>	<i>Df</i>	$VIF^{\frac{1}{2 \cdot Df}}$
Countries	2.75	26	1.02
Influence of transnational institutions	1.40	1	1.18
Strength of European institutions	1.24	1	1.11
Competences of subnational authorities	1.17	1	1.08
Importance of European funds	1.22	1	1.10
Effectiveness of transnational organizations	1.28	1	1.13
Effectiveness of direct relations	1.14	1	1.07
Political identity: European	1.23	1	1.11
Political identity: Cultural	1.11	1	1.05
Political identity: Ideological	1.12	1	1.06
Ideological position	1.19	2	1.04
PolId.ideology:LRC	21.25	2	2.15

## B.3 Heteroskedasticity

**Figure B.3:** Diagnostic plots for the distribution of residuals

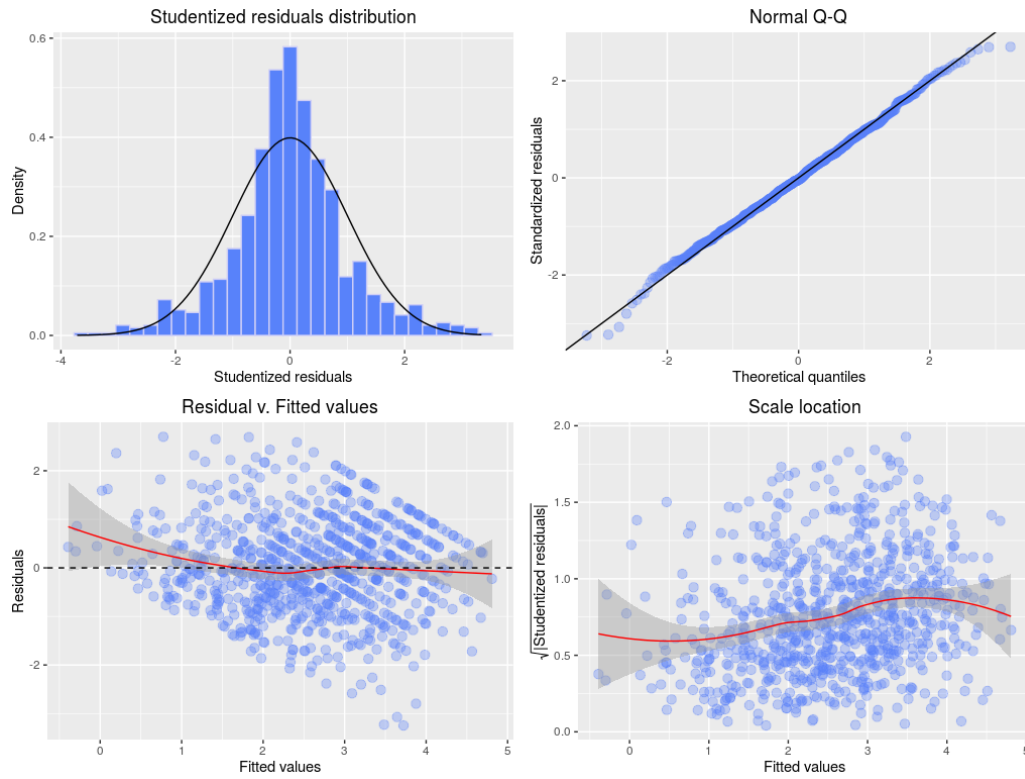


Results of the Breusch-Pagan test in the initially specified model:

$$BP = 53.88$$

$$df = 39$$

$$p = 0.057$$

**Figure B.4:** Diagnostic plots for the distribution of residuals after adjustment

Results of the Breusch-Pagan test in the adjusted model:

$$BP = 48.41$$

$$df = 39$$

$$p = 0.144$$



# Appendix C

## Qualitative Interviews

This appendix explicates how the qualitative interviews are conducted, in three sections:

**Research ethics** This section includes the ‘participant information sheet’ and the ‘consent form’ in their original printed formats, illustrating how appointment requests are made to prospective interviewees.

**Interview guidelines** This section presents the main questions asked during interviews. Due to their semi-structured nature, interviews did not necessarily follow a definite format, but these questions provided guidelines which ensured that all important points are covered, and that there is a necessary degree of consistency across interviews. These questions are divided into two groups:

**General questions** This set of questions is used as a guideline in the interviews with the political members of the organizations. The exact formulation depends on whether the interviewee is a member of CoR, CLRAE or both.

**Specific questions** This set of questions specifically targets the aspects related to political groups and na-

tional delegations. These are directed to staff members working for political groups or national delegations, as well as political members who have a leading role in the political groups or national delegations (in addition to the general questions).

**Conducted interviews** This section includes a table summarizing the relevant information regarding the conducted interviews. The top part of the table provides individual details about the profile of interviewees, and the bottom part provides technical details. For those who did not consent to the use of their names, the term *Undisclosed* is used instead of information which may reveal their identities, and other such information is masked accordingly.

## C.1 Research ethics

### Participant Information Sheet for the Study on: The Role of Local and Regional Authorities in European Politics

Rusen Yasar  
PhD Candidate  
University of Cambridge

Dear {{Title}} {{Name}},

I am writing to invite you to take part in a research project. Before you decide, I would like to bring to your attention several points about this study.

**Purpose and Content of the Study.** I am conducting this study as part of my doctoral research project on the role of local and regional authorities in European politics, with a particular focus on the influence of European institutions. My dissertation will include case studies of the Committee of the Regions and the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities.

**Participation and Participants.** For the case studies, I am willing to conduct face-to-face interviews with the members of these organizations. Participation is completely voluntary. You will be asked to complete a consent form and a copy will be given to you. Please note that your right to opt out is inalienable. You can withdraw before, during or after the interview, and you do not have to give any reason for your withdrawal.

**Interviews.** This invitation is for a 'semi-structured qualitative interview' estimated to last about 30 minutes. You will be directed a small number of questions, and you can take as much time as you please to answer these. You will decide whether the interview will be audio-recorded. The information that you wish to keep 'off the record' will be neither transcribed nor used in the study. The interview venue and time will be agreed at your convenience.

**Confidentiality and Data Protection.** The information you provide will be kept strictly confidential. Confidentiality measures will be in line with data protection legislations of the UK and the EU. Your name will be used only if you give explicit consent. Digital data will be stored in password-protected environments, and non-digital data will be kept in a private space. I will be the only person who can access these.

**Results.** The main result of the study will be a thesis submitted to the University of Cambridge for the degree of PhD. This thesis may also be used as the basis of my further academic publications. All the data will be destroyed when the main objectives are achieved.

**Questions and Complaints.** If you require further information or would like to ask a question regarding this study, you can directly contact me with the details given below. If you wish to report misconduct or make a complaint, you can also contact the Department of POLIS or the Ethics Committee at the University of Cambridge.

#### Contact Details.

Correspondence:    {{ Address line 1 }}  
                              {{ Address line 2 }}  
Email:                {{ e-mail address }}  
Mobile:              {{ Belgium phone number }}  
                              {{ UK phone number }}

Yours faithfully,

Rusen Yasar

**Consent Form for the Interviews for the Study on:  
The Role of Local and Regional Authorities in European Politics**

Rusen Yasar  
PhD Candidate  
University of Cambridge

This form is for you to state whether or not you agree to take part in the study as an interviewee. You can change your mind and withdraw from the study at a later date. Please complete the form if:

- you think that you have been given sufficient information,
- you find the confidentiality measures satisfactory,
- you agree to voluntarily take part in the study,
- and you agree to the use of this interview for academic purposes.

If you agreed to take part in this study, please state below your preferences for several specific issues about the way the information that you provide will be handled. You can still take part in the study without agreeing to any of the following, and you can change your preferences at a later time.

Do you agree to this interview being audio-recorded?	Yes	No
Do you agree to your real name being used in the research?	Yes	No
Do you agree to the name of your organization being used in the research?	Yes	No

Date:

Name:

Signature:

## C.2 Qualitative interview guidelines

### C.2.1 General questions for members

1. (If the interviewee is a member of both organizations) **To what extent, in your opinion, CoR and CLRAE are similar or different?** (If the interviewee is a member of one organization) **How would you describe CoR/CLRAE in general?** With regard to:
  - Their raison d'être,
  - Their main missions,
  - Their major strengths and weaknesses,
  - The legal and political instruments at their disposal.
2. **How do you see the past and the future of CoR and CLRAE?** With regard to:
  - Whether they have become more powerful since their establishment,
  - The reasons for their successes and failures,
  - Your expectations of them to become more or less powerful in the future.
3. **Both CoR and CLRAE are organized around two pillars: national delegations and political groups. How would you compare these two pillars in both institutions?** With regard to:
  - The level of influence of political groups in both institutions,
  - The level of influence of national delegations in both institutions,
  - Which one is more effective in ensuring coherence among members,
  - Whether you think your national delegation and your political group are different from other delegations and groups.
4. **How would you describe the conception of multilevel governance for these organizations?** With regard to:
  - The emphasis of CoR on promoting multi-level governance,
  - A potential role for CLRAE in promoting multi-level governance,
  - The meaning of multilevel governance with or without the European level.

### **C.2.2 Questions specific to parties and delegations**

**1. How would you describe the way political groups / national delegations work?** With regard to the role of the political group / national delegation in:

- Shaping draft opinions,
- Encouraging members to take common positions on the issues discussed in CoR,
- Shaping the discussions during plenary sessions and commission meetings,
- Ensuring cooperation and communication between members when they are not together in Brussels.

**2. What are the differences between political groups / national delegations?**

With regard to:

- The distinguishing features of your group/delegation in terms of the main missions of CoR/CLRAE,
- The main position of your group/delegation in terms of the focus of CoR on multilevel governance and/or the place of CLRAE regarding the concept of multilevel governance,
- The support of your group/delegation for the Charter and the White Paper on multilevel governance?

**3. What are the differences and relationships between political groups and national delegations?** With regard to:

- The tendency of members to follow the positions set by national delegations or political groups,
- Different national backgrounds of the members of the political group, or party differences within the national delegation.

## C.3 Details of interviews

**Table C.1:** List of qualitative interviews

Interview no	Name of interviewee	Role in CoR	Role in CLRAE	Country	Political affiliation
Interview 1	Karl-Heinz Lambertz	First vice-president	President of the SOC group	Belgium	PES/Socialist group
Interview 2	Marc Cools		President of ILDG Group	Belgium	Independent and Liberal Dem.
Interview 3	René Souchon	President of nat. delg.		France	PES group
Interview 4	<i>Undisclosed</i>	Member of staff		Undisclosed	N/A
Interview 5	Izabela Gorczyca	Coordinator of nat. delg.		Poland	N/A
Interview 6	Malgorzata Sylla	Coordinator of nat. delg.		Poland	N/A
Interview 7	Bas Verkerk	President of ALDE group		Netherlands	Liberals and Democrats
Interview 8	<i>Undisclosed</i>	Coordinator of nat. delg.		Undisclosed	N/A
Interview 9	Esteban Mas Portell	Alt. president of nat. delg.		Spain	EPP group
Interview 10	Karin Oliver	Coordinator of nat. delg.		Spain	N/A
Interview 11	Luc Martens		Member	Belgium	EPP group
Interview 12	Heinz Lehmann	President of nat. delg.		Germany	EPP group
Interview 13	Herwig van Staa	President of nat. delg.	Vice-president of EPP Group	Austria	EPP group
Interview 14	Catuscia Marini	President of PES Group	Member	Italy	PES/Socialist group
Interview 15	Christina McKelvie		Member	UK	Non-affiliated
Interview no	Date	Place	Mode of interview	Mode of recording	
Interview 1	07/05/15	Eupen	Face to face	Voice recording	
Interview 2	12/05/15	Brussels	Face to face	Voice recording	
Interview 3	18/05/15	Brussels/Clermont-Ferrand	Telephone	Voice recording	
Interview 4	19/05/15	Brussels	Face to face	Note taking	
Interview 5	20/05/15	Brussels	Face to face	Note taking	
Interview 6	22/05/15	Delft	Face to face	Voice recording	
Interview 7	26/05/15	Brussels	Face to face	Note taking	
Interview 8	29/05/15	Brussels	Face to face	Note taking	
Interview 9	01/06/15	Brussels	Face to face	Voice recording	
Interview 10	02/06/15	Brussels	Face to face	Voice recording	
Interview 11	03/06/15	Brussels	Face to face	Voice recording	
Interview 12	24/06/15	Cambridge/Perugia	Face to face	Correspondence	
Interview 13	28/02/17	Edinburgh	E-mail	Voice recording	
			Face to face		